

# WORDS FROM THE VEDAS

( an Anthology of Vedic verses with English  
translation and commentary )

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गिरिभ्रजो नोर्मयो मदन्तः

ऋग्वेद १०।६८।१

" Like joyous streams bursting from the mountain

( Rigveda X 68 1 )

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## Preface

The Upanishads have rightly attracted general attention, but the Vedas which are admittedly their sources have remained more or less sealed books. It is true that portions of the Vedas are difficult to interpret, but fortunately there is much in them that presents no such difficulty. I have limited this anthology to such verses in the Vedas as have been clearly interpreted and have caused no serious differences of opinion between Indian and western schools of scholarship. To be on safer ground I have adopted the oriental scholars, Indian and western, as my authority, and the translation is based on their work, though in the interpretation of the religious and spiritual significance, I have received much help from the writings of Indian authors, including eminent spiritual leaders. I have attempted to keep the English version as close to the original as possible.

In writing the commentary my aim has been to indicate the poetical and spiritual content of the verses. I have not attempted any philological or anthropological study, though I have pointed out certain facts which are likely to interest the student of comparative religion.

In quoting the Vedas I have taken, as a rule, the single mantra as the unit. For this I have found my support in the Vedas themselves. The later Vedas frequently quote single mantras from the earlier. The Upanishads also follow the same method. In fact,

when, after going through hundreds of verses, I selected a gem, thinking it was a fresh discovery on my part, I found, to my great surprise, that my attempt had been forestalled hundreds of years ago by the Upanishads, though the surprise was not altogether unpleasant, because it did give me considerable satisfaction to discover that my choice had the confirmation of such high authority! I have followed the Vedic practice of repeating a mantra in different contexts.

I have grouped my selections under different heads in the manner of the *Bhagavad Gita*, each representing a particular religious attitude.

I have referred the verses to the Vedās from which I quoted them, though later on I have found that some of them occur in other Vedās as well.

As the anthology is meant for the general reader the Vedic texts have been printed without the usual accent marks. In order to distinguish the translation from the commentary, I have placed the former within inverted commas.

In printing the Vedic text I have adopted a device which shows individual words in their distinctive form without breaking up the "sandhi" through which, usually, the final letter of one word is jumbled up with the initial letter of the following word, producing the impression of a long—sometimes bewilderingly long—single word. The device consists in using the complete

letter with the consonant mark instead its broken form meant for combinations, in the case of consonants; and allowing the vowel to stand in its own form instead of as a vowel mark, in such combinations. This should not make any difference in pronunciation. For Example, बृहदतमुग्रम् is printed as बृहद् अतम् उग्रम् । I commend this method for the printing of Sanskrit

While presenting this little book to the public I record my obligations to the Vedic scholars, eastern and western, whom I have frequently consulted and accepted as my guide, as well as to several learned friends who have assisted me in the work. Portions of the Introduction were published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* and many of the verses in the *Arya* of Kolhapur

A. C. Bose

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# THE VEDAS

The Rigveda	containing	10,552	mantras (verses)
The Samaveda		1 875	,
The Yajurveda (V S) ,		2 086	,
The Atharvaveda	„	5,987	,
Total		20 500	mantras

There are repetitions especially of a large number of Rigvedic verses in the other Vedas

## ABBREVIATIONS

ऋ or Rg stands for the Rigveda and the figures following this indicate 'mandal' 'sukta' and 'mantra' respectively

यु य or य (वा) or Yajur stands for Shukla Yajurveda Vājasenīya Samhitā and the figures following indicate chapter and mantra respectively

अ. or Ath stands for Atharvaveda and the figures following stand for 'kāṇḍa', 'sukta' and 'mantra', respectively

साम or Sam stands for Sāmaveda and the number indicates the sequence of the mantra

# CONTENTS

	Pages
PREFACE	1-1v
INTRODUCTION	
I. Some Facts about the Vedic Religion	1 xi
II. The Vedic Religion and Orientalists	xi xx
III Monotheism and Polytheism	xx xxxi
IV. Vedic Henotheism—the cult of the One in Many	xxxii-1
V Some Basic Principles of the Vedic Religion	1-cii
THE PATH OF DEVOTION ( भक्तियोग )	1 32
THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE ( ज्ञानयोग )	33 52
THE PATH OF MYSTICISM ( राजयोग )	53-96
THE PATH OF SPLENDOUR ( विभूतियोग )	97 161
THE PATH OF ACTION ( कर्मयोग )	162-246



# WORDS FROM THE VÉDAS

## INTRODUCTION

### I. Some Facts about the Vedic Religion

#### 1. The Vedas

The religion and culture of Hindus are based on the *Vedas*, which no specialist, either western or eastern, has placed later than 1500 B C. Some have placed them much earlier.

Except for certain non conformist cults, all religious authorities in the different ages in India have recognised the *Vedas* as the supreme religious authority. Not only this, but the texts of the four Vedic Samhitas consisting of some twenty-four thousand hymns have been regarded as the most precious religious documents from the earliest times onwards and for the last four thousand years and more have been handed down by oral tradition — a feat unequalled in the history of human civilisation. The same attention has not been paid to the Upanishads or the Epics or the works of Sanskrit classical writers.

Equally surprising is the fact that the Vedic religion should have survived through these thousands of years, inspite of great social and political upheavals and terrific onslaughts on it from age to age. A consideration of these onslaughts and of the reaction of the religion to them may throw some light on its inner power. The following are the more important religious onslaughts.

## 2. Onslaughts on the Vedic Religion.

(1) *The Buddhist Onslaught* The first great onslaught was that of Buddhism, a non conformist sect of the Vedic religion which arose in the 6th century B C. It persuaded one half of India to accept the older religion in a restricted ethical sense, by renouncing ritual and metaphysics. But within a few centuries India absorbed the new sect into the parent body and little trace of

Buddhism as an independent religion was left in this country. In doing so it adopted many of the new attractive features of Buddhism, like temples, image-worship etc. as also some of the ethical points, like the emphasis on non violence. Hinduism (as the Vedic religion, nationalised among the people of India, has come to be called) had adopted a method of deifying eminent men (as 'avatars') and according to that Buddha himself was accepted as the ninth in a line of ten avatars.

(2) *The Moslem Onslaught* Moslem sailors from Arabia were settled in Malabar by the Hindu king there in very early Moslem times. Arabs invaded and conquered Sind in 711. But they could not proceed further and never reappeared as invaders. Other Moslem invaders came in the 11th century and later and India was almost wholly under Moslem rule for over 500 years. But the Moslem Power that had conquered and converted, almost to a man, great countries like Persia, Turkey, Egypt, Afghanistan and parts of Europe could affect the religion of the Hindus very little indeed, for after so many centuries the Moslems, including later converts, do not form even one fourth of the population to day. At the end of their palmy days, early in the 18th century, before new tracts like East Bengal provided numerous converts, the Moslem percentage must have been at

the most a third of what it is now—i.e. about 8, including foreign immigrants. Hinduism preserved itself almost miraculously against the military, social and economic pressure exerted by Islam. The Vedas were preserved against the vandalism of all times by being handed down through the oral tradition. Great saints arose who established religious sects (Vaishnavite and Shaivite) that were democratic in character and carried a mass appeal through the cult of devotion (*bhakti*). And Indian womanhood distinguished itself by its loyalty even when facing terrible defeat and destruction.

(3) *The Christian Onslaught* Shortly after the death of the founder of Christianity missionaries were at work in different parts of Europe, and everywhere the new religion entirely supplanted the old. The worship of Odin and the religion of Druids as well as Greek and Roman Paganism became completely extinct, everybody having changed over to Christianity. To India there came an Apostle, St. Thomas in the first century and preached in Kerala (Travancore-Cochin). But the religion did not make a headway in this country. In fact after eighteen hundred years the followers of St. Thomas are still confined to Kerala and even there they form hardly 30 p.c. of the population.

Christianity came a second time to India with the Portuguese in the 16th century. The Spaniards and

the Portuguese had forced their religion on the Red Indians of Central and South America. Spain forcibly converted the whole of Philippines. But Portugal could not convert the whole even of the small tract of Goa with all its inquisitorial activities. Even to day the Christians do not form a majority there.

The third wave of Christianity came with the missionaries in the British Period. Now the contest was unequal. On the Christian side were the new scientific knowledge of the modern world and the prestige that went with it; on the side of Hinduism the ignorance of the masses with hardly any leaders for them. Hinduism received a few shocks in the beginning. Some of the enlightened western-educated Hindus renounced their religion. But a strange and powerful reaction followed. Great leaders of the religion appeared and produced a feeling among the Hindus that theirs was the first and greatest religion in the world. The activities of the Christian missionaries were now limited to the poorest and most backward communities from among which they have still been effecting conversion, though the means adopted by them are not always purely religious. But reformist bodies like the Arya Samaj have come into being that are trying to remove the disabilities of the backward and depressed classes and consequently to prevent conversion. It may be stated by way of contrast

stopped admitting others to its fold ) No tax corresponding to the *jizia* was imposed on Moslems Even Hindu temples turned into mosques are not known to have been restored to Hinduism There are instances of great courtesy having been shown to the conquered This contrasts strongly with what the Spaniards did to the Moslems who had subjugated their country for 800 years and had been finally defeated after frequently subjecting them to the Inquisition and forced conversion they at last in 1609 gave the Moslems three days time in which to clear out of the country

Again, foreign refugees were made welcome to this land, as in the case of Jews in South India ( 1st century ) and Parsees in Bombay Presidency ( 8th century ) The attitude remains unchanged to this day when fresh refugees are entering India

It is this religious courtesy and the total absence of coercion in religious matters that won a high moral prestige for Hinduism

#### 4 The Hindu Spirit among Converts

It is also interesting to note that Hindu converts to other religions have been as a rule more liberal than many followers of those religions elsewhere For example the Syrian Christians of Kerala are not known to have burnt heretics or witches ; nor did the

Roman Catholic converts of Goa show any eagerness to emulate Portugal in its religious warfare against heretics and infidels

Similarly Moslems in India have lived amicably with Hindus, forming part of a social unit with the latter as an important factor. Such fusion of Moslem and non Moslem is rare outside India and China. Again there were Indian Moslems who highly specialised in arts like portrait-painting, to which the religion as practised in the country of its origin was strongly opposed. Thus even where Hindus left their religion, they retained a good deal of their culture and adjusted their new religions to the ideals of that culture.

From all these points of view the history of Hinduism will appear to be unique in the religious history of the world.

### 5. Facts about Shuddhi

If we were to consider the people in India who left Hinduism in the middle ages or modern times for some other religion we would find that in many cases conversions were effected by force, through the economic pressure of taxes, and through ordinary financial inducements. But more powerful than these external causes were internal causes like the ignorance of their religion among Hindus owing to the lack of religious leaders, and social disabilities of certain

backward castes (called "untouchables") The mass conversions in Sind, Kashmir and East Bengal can be directly attributed to the absence of religious teachers Had there been a saint like Ramananda or Chaitanya or Namadeva or Tukarama in these tracts, the masses there would not have changed their religion What happened to these out-lying parts of India also happened to the Hindu colonies like Malaya and Java with minor exceptions all went over to other religions \*

If Christianity in modern times has made much less progress in India than it was expected to, it was due to the knowledge of the purer and higher form of Hinduism being spread among the people by modern reformist bodies It has also been found of late that wherever the knowledge of the Hindu religion has been brought, there has been a desire among converts from the religion to re enter its fold As Hinduism had shut its doors against all comers no return was possible for ages But as soon as the door was thrown open, thousands were found to flock to it for re admission This is the movement called "Shuddhi" now a-days

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\* The same fate threatens the Hindus settled in West Indies and South America at the present time On the other hand the presence on however small a scale of enlightened elements in places like Fiji and Mauritius makes a difference in the situation



This Shuddhi is certainly surprising and is another indication of the marvellous vitality and magic of Hinduism. We do not hear of such mass movements for re-admission to the original religion elsewhere. Greek Christians in large bodies have not wanted to go back to Paganism nor Hebrew Christians to Judaism nor Christians, converted to Islam, to Christianity nor the forcibly converted Moslems of Spain to Islam. But in India millions of Buddhists returned to Hinduism and recently thousands of Moslems and Christians have done so. All possible measures, political, administrative and diplomatic, are found necessary in modern India to prevent Hindu converts to other religions from returning to the Hindu fold. Arya Samaj leaders like Swami Shraddhanand, against whom no case of unfair criticism of foreign religions is known to have been made, were martyred for their championship of the cause of such re-admission.

## 6 The Magic of Hinduism

How to account for the magic in Hinduism? We think that the root of the whole matter lies in the impishable truths and unconquerable spirit contained in the original documents the *Vedas*, and the noble lives lived according to high moral and spiritual ideals by generations of sages and saints, kings and commanders as well as the masses of the people. True, the Vedic religion through hundreds of years has

accumulated a vast number of imperfections, but there were also proper adjustments made from age to age to meet the requirements of the time-spirit. Perhaps nowhere has the spiritual ideal of life and character been so lofty and nowhere has the approximation of practice to some of these ideals been so close, as it has been among Hindus. If Hinduism is weak today it is because all her ideals have not been followed with equal persistence or sincerity. The social ideal has been most neglected—caste and untouchability are now great stumbling-blocks in its way. They may undo what centuries of noble effort have done.

But if the Vedic religion, so disorganised and neglected, could exercise such magical influence as its history shows, how much more can it do for humanity if it is truer to its noble aspirations and ideals !

## II The Vedic Religion and Orientalists

It is usual to consider the *Vedas* from the philological, anthropological and sociological points of view. Sufficient attention does not appear to have been paid to the fact that they have been the basis of a religion that has been followed by hundreds of millions of people for thousands of years.

There are several difficulties in the way of a real religious study of the material. The invaluable commentaries of Indian scholars like Śāyana have one grave

defect - that in respect of the religion they speak in terms of their own age and are therefore anachronistic. It was the indefatigable labour of the great orientalists that discovered new ways of interpreting the Vedas, but in understanding their interpretation of the religion, we have to take note of a few facts that are likely to have influenced their judgment in an adverse manner. Most of these scholars were Europeans. And these European scholars of the nineteenth century had certain prepossessions which must have made it very difficult for them to arrive at an objective view of the Vedic religion.

### 1. Christian Monotheism

First, most of them were devout Christians, attached to particular churches. Now these churches had one common tenet, viz. that the worship of the true God was limited to Christianity alone and heathens and infidels, by whatever name they called the object of their worship, were not worshipping God, but something else. In the middle ages Christians held the belief that heathens worshipped the devil. Later there was some liberality, but only to the extent of believing that they worshipped stocks and stones and other natural objects.

The difference between the "monotheism" of Christians and the so called "polytheism" or "pantheism" of Pagans was a fundamental one. Monotheism stood for belief in a God in heaven, surrounded by angels and

archangels, seraphim and cherubim, who was the sole monarch of the universe and whose will was law. Those who obeyed His will (communicated to mankind through His prophets) were sent after death to an eternal heaven and those who disobeyed it were in peril of eternal hell fire and could be redeemed only by the special intercession of the Saviour, the Son of God. For one born and systematically brought up in this creed, it was next to impossible to believe that the people who offered their worship to the Dawn or to the Sun or to an abstract and neuter Brahman or "That Existence" [Tat Sat] could ever be worshipping God.

Again, for Christianity this world was a halting place in the pilgrimage of the soul to heaven. Here it was surrounded by false attractions of the earth. True religion was to be dead to the life of the flesh and awake to the eternal life of the soul. How could one accepting this view of life think highly of the ways of Paganism—of the Pagan joy of life, the Pagan raptures at the glory of the earth and the sky, the Pagan blending of the material and the spiritual and the Pagan humanism—the exaltation of man and of human affections and aspirations?

Indian Paganism had one or two special points about it which widened the gulf of difference between it and Christianity. In the descriptions of the Divinity, it caused much confusion to the Christian thinker by

mixing up all sorts of conceptions. For example, in the same breath it described the Divine as "Father and Mother," as "Father, Kinsman, Brother, Friend for ever," as "Bosom friend," as "the most endeared Guest," as a "youthful Friend" whose friendship kept one "ever young." Not only this, He was as "husband to the wife," as "a lover of maidens," like a "chaste wife beloved of her husband."

The conception of the Divinity as feminine, though not far removed from Roman Catholic Christianity, was a strange idea for Protestant churches. How could a man possibly worship the Divinity by addressing his prayer to a Goddess described as a "white robed Maiden," "like a Bride decorated by the mother"?

Again to the orientalist, the "polytheism" of the Vedas was most baffling because the deities are never definitely individualised, they do not even form an Olympic synod where every god and goddess has a well-defined, concrete personality. Can one ever imagine Jupiter being "father as well as mother" or Jupiter being Apollo, and Apollo and Mercury Jupiter himself? Again, will anybody expect Apollo, Mercury, Jupiter and the whole host of the divinities to be described as a mere *It* or *That* or as a Divine Existence? But all these happen in the case of Vedic Deities. For example, Agni is identified with Varuna (R. V. 1. 1. 1), and with Varuna and Mitra (R. V.

VII 12 3) In Indra are Mitra, Varuna and Pushan (R V VI 24 5) ' That One Existence the sages call in many ways—as Agni, Yama Matarishwan , says the Veda (R V I 14 46)

## 2 Christian Ethics

Another vital difference between Christianity and Indian Paganism' was in respect of the ethical standard Christianity had popularised the ethical doctrine of surrender to evil, of turning the other cheek when one has been smitten of loving the enemy This was accepted as the highest morality Hence the further one went from this in respect of the ethical standard the more degraded one was But all forms of Paganism have the roots of their ethics in the heroic ideal Indian Paganism took its stand on Truth and Order both as cosmic principles and as ethical laws of life In the latter case it required all the energy and valour of which man was capable to be applied to the task of making truth and order prevail against falsehood and license in other words of *ṛg* goodness prevail over evil The conflict here but it was this severity that inspired epic heroism So according to Vedic Paganism there could be no compromise with evil it must be fought strenuously and relentlessly The most important of the Vedic Deities, Indra symbolises this heroic ideal Now, to the typical Christian, all the fire and fury

associated with heroism is the mark of a barbarous state of existence. Some orientalists, however, have gone to the extent of recognising Varuna, described as the King of the Universe (other Deities also are so described) whose noose gets hold of every sinner and whose emissaries roam over the earth, as the ethical Deity, even as the *Ultimate Reality*. But the true Christian with his notion of "the highest ethics" could not find himself well disposed towards the Hero-God Indra to whom many of the grandest Vedic hymns are addressed.

### 3. The Victorian Theory of Progress

The theological prepossessions of the orientalist were reinforced by scientific theories of the later nineteenth century. Chief among these was the doctrine of *social evolution and progress*, popularised by Herbert Spencer, which, however, had no real scientific connection with Darwin's theory of biological evolution. According to the theory of progress, the world was getting more and more perfect as time passed on; hence things in the past were imperfect in proportion to their distance from the present time. This provided the orientalists with a ready assumption that the Vedic age, being extremely remote, must have been in an extremely crude stage of civilisation. It was not till recently that this facile theory of progress was repudiated and among other things it was established

repudiated and among other things it was established that in matters of art and the spiritual side of life, there has been no progress for the last hundreds of years. This new corrective, however, does not appear to have affected oriental studies.

#### 4. Philology and Anthropology

The nineteenth century was an age of science and the sciences that chiefly interested the orientalist were philology and anthropology. It was the practice in those days to trace the words of literature to their roots. The practice was quite good in so far as it applied to words of which the meaning was known. But when unknown words were traced to real or imaginary roots and their meaning discovered, there was often in evidence a dogmatism worse than that of religion. Similar was the attitude in anthropology. The explanation of features of life in terms of the crudest possible theory of their first origin became the rule of the day. The orientalists often let themselves go in this respect to lengths far outstripping the legitimate laws of their science.

Having presumed that the Vedas belong to primitive times, orientalists have expressed learned opinions about their defects as primitive poetry. For example, Cowell says, "*The poetry of the Rigveda is, singularly deficient in that simplicity and natural pathos or sublimity which we naturally look for in the songs of an*



## 5. Victorian Certitude

Last, but not the least, was *the Victorian certitude* that marked the temper of the thinkers of the later nineteenth century, including the average oriental scholar. He did not seem to have any mental reservation in anything, nor to have doubted the accuracy of his conclusions to any the least extent. We find the more intellectually conscientious orientalists of today confessing to an absolute absence of finality with regard to most of the theories held about the Vedas on the basis of philological interpretation. But with Victorian orientalists things stood in absolute certainty of truth.

## 6. Legitimate Indian Sources of Interpretation.

It is true that Indians themselves could not be of much use in oriental research. They derived their ideas about the Vedas from commentary written at least three thousand years after they had been composed. The religion that they practised was a later form of "Paganism," complete in all individual particulars and, distinct from the Vedic type in many fundamental respects including the conception of the Divinity. And it will not be wrong to believe that the very backward conditions in which Indian masses were found to live and their political subjugation tended to prejudice the case of their ancestors in the eyes of the western observers.

Now in order to make an attempt to understand the Vedic view of life as a religion that has vitally affected the lives of hundreds of millions of people, we should approach the orientalist in a critical spirit. Their researches can never be ignored in Vedic studies, but sufficient allowance must be made for their strange prepossessions. And the evidence of genuine Indian authorities in respect of the trend of religious thought should by no means be set aside. In this sense, the later Vedas will provide useful commentary on the earlier, so will later developments of the Vedic religion in the Upanishads, in Buddhism, in the Bhāgavata cult, in the Yoga cult etc., provide valuable material for the interpretation of the Vedic religion, even where they do not agree with the Vedic stand point.

### III Monotheism and Polytheism

#### 1. Two Thought-patterns

To the philosopher monotheism and polytheism may mean just the belief in one God and many Gods, respectively but in relation to practical religion to which the terms apply, they mean much more than this. It is customary to think that monotheism is superior to polytheism. The theory of progress has led to the belief that polytheism perfects itself into monotheism by a process of growth. But a close examination of the cults will show that the claim of superiority is based on

assumptions not acceptable to all. It will appear that the difference between them is not that of the degree of perfection, but of method. They represent two distinct patterns of thought.

## 2. Aspects of Monotheism

Let us consider some of the salient aspects of these patterns. *First*, monotheism is the belief in a single Divine Person. But this is only a partial description of the cult. Some think that it is the oneness alone that matters. But it is not so. For instance one who thinks of the Divine as an impersonal Essence is not a monotheist in the technical sense of the term. Those who quote the famous Rigvedic verse that says that "*The One Being the sages call by many names*," do not sufficiently realise that here 'the One Being (एक सद्)' is in the neuter, standing for the Divine Existence and not for a Divine Individual and hence is not the same as contemplated by the well known creeds that describe themselves as monotheistic. To the monotheistic creeds *God is a Person and not a metaphysical Essence*.

*Secondly* as a Person the monotheistic Divinity cannot be conceived in any way one likes. For example, one who accepts a Single Divinity as Mother or Maiden is not a monotheist in the practical sense of the term. To the monotheist the Divinity is not only a Single Person but also a Masculine Person. *Thus the distinction between polytheism and monotheism is not one of number alone but of gender also*.

*Thirdly*, a monotheistic God cannot be any kind of Male Person. He can only be a Father. One would not be a monotheist if one were to think of the Divine as Brother or any other relation.

Supposing "Agni" in the following verse means the Ultimate Being, He would not be the typical monotheistic God because the relations in which He stands to man are more than one.

अग्निं मन्ये पित्रम् अग्निम् आपिम्  
अग्निं भ्रातरं सदमितु मखायम् । ऋ ७।७।३

' Agni I deem my Father, my Kinsman,

I deem Him my Brother, my Friend for ever '

In other words, the monotheistic God is not only a single Person and a male Person, but *He stands in a single relationship to man—in that of Father*.

*Fourthly*, a point already involved in the foregoing is that the monotheistic God cannot be imagined to be of any age. Being a Father, He cannot be contemplated, say, as a Child. Even as Father He cannot be believed as youthful. He is a very elderly Person *not only a Father but a Patriarch*.

*Fifthly*, as a Person the monotheistic God cannot exist anywhere. He has His special abode—heaven. He is a Father who is in heaven. He may go where ever He likes, but heaven is His place of residence.

Perhaps the most essential difference between monotheism and polytheism lies here that *monotheism*

*contemplates the Divine in heaven and polytheism  
contemplates the Divine in the universe*

This makes a difference in the entire conception of life and religion. To the monotheist heaven represents a superior plane of existence and God a superior order of reality. To that order belong angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, who also live on that plane. According to this cult while heaven is sacred, the universe is profane, while God and the angels who live in heaven are holy, man and other mortals on the earth are sinful, while God is great, man is small.

Polytheism finds the Divine in the universe and hence there is but a thin dividing line between the sacred and the profane, the human and the Divine, the mortal and the immortal. In fact polytheism contemplates heaven on earth and God in nature and in the heart of man.

Hence while polytheism is attached to the earth and thinks in terms of life and the joy of living, monotheism is attached to a hereafter and lives for heaven looking down upon earthly things. This trait of polytheism has been called Paganism.

*Sixthly*, monotheism is not a simple belief in a God in heaven who is a Father. Its God a Patriarch, is a Ruler. He is the King of Heaven. And from heaven He also rules over the universe as its sole Monarch. Thus *monotheism is monarchical theism*.

Hence the ideology of monotheism is the ideology of monarchy. Heaven is the royal abode. The King is in His throne. He has his servants and emissaries. He appoints His vicegerents. He takes the best of His subjects to His heavenly court. The worst of them are flung into the dark prison house, Hell.

As King, He claims unstinted allegiance and homage. The subjects must offer their respects often enough and regularly enough to satisfy His royal position. They must bow and bend before Him and thus honour and exalt Him. They must stand in dread of Him.

And as the only King He is jealous of usurpers and rivals. He alone should receive the homage and no other. To offer homage to any but the God of Heaven is to be a traitor to the Kingdom of God. No wonder that ideal subjects of the Kingdom have thought that nothing can please the King better than the punishment of those who try to offer their honour and homage to persons or objects other than the God of Heaven.

*Seventhly*, the monotheistic God has His perpetual Adversary or Enemy—Satan, who is a sort of Anti-God. Hence there is rivalry between God and Satan for the possession of the universe. Men are in constant risk of going over to God's Enemy and God's wrath is directed against them when they are suspected of having done so.

*Eighthly*, as monotheism centres in a Monarch, who is an absolute Ruler, the chief thing for His subjects is to know His will. The Divine Will is the only guide for man in his conduct on the earth. How to know the will of God? He sends His messengers (Prophets) on earth to make His will known to mankind. Those men are virtuous who bow to His will and make it prevail on earth as in heaven. Those are sinners who disobey or defy His will or—it comes to that—the prophet who conveys the will to mankind.

Religion, here, is the exercise by man of his own will to force himself to obey the Will of God.

Polytheism, on the other hand, conceives fundamental ethical and cosmic principles to which the divine nature conforms. The Vedas, for example, lay down Truth (सत्य) and Order or Justice (ऋत) as such principles. One can realise God by realising the operation of Truth and Order in the Universe. "The holy Law's commandments make me mighty", says the Deity revealing Himself to the sage [R. V VIII 100 4]. God is the "Protector of the Law". He has, according to this conception, no arbitrary will. We may say that He cannot will what is unjust or evil. So the worshipper must follow truth and law (धर्म).

### 3 Polytheism: Two Types

#### a) *Popular Polytheism or Multitheism*

What is Polytheism?

There are two broad types of Polytheism which must be distinguished each from the other. One is popular or anthropomorphic polytheism which finds many Gods instead of just the One of monotheism in heaven. It believes in a synod or assembly of Gods, each being a well defined individual possessing a character of his own, and each distinguished from the others by sex, special attributes and sometimes even age. The only difference between monotheism and popular polytheism is that in the latter the divine power is not centralised in one person and hence the divine government is oligarchic instead of monarchical. We may call it Multitheism.

Here one God or Goddess may be invoked against another and the evil points in one may be counter balanced by the good points in another.

Again, a monotheist stands or falls by one God; a polytheist having several may change one God for another if the former fails to satisfy him. Thus for a monotheist the only alternative to his faith is heresy or atheism, but for a polytheist the alternative is not the negation of God, but the search of a better and greater God.

Such was the polytheism of Egypt and Greece and Rome and such has been, with certain differences, the polytheism in the Indian Puranas.



*(b) Higher Polytheism or Unitheism*

But there is a higher polytheism which is not anthropomorphic but pantheistic. Here the Divinities are not individualised or particularised. They do not live in a heaven nor do they form an assembly. They hardly exist as well defined individuals. One of them is easily identified with another. Here one Deity is not worshipped to counteract the influence of another. On the contrary one is readily substituted for another. The Deity in this system of thought may be spoken of as one as two, as many, or many in one or one in many, may be spoken of again either as masculine or feminine or neuter. Such is the polytheism if such should be the name, found in the Vedas and in the higher type of the Purāṇik religion in India. Max Muller coined the term "Henotheism" for this cult. We should like to call it "Unitheism".

#### 4 Aspects of Polytheism

Polytheism has some common characteristics, irrespective of the type it represents though in the higher form there are subtleties not found in the popular type.

*First, polytheism is poetic theism.* It approaches the divine idea through poetry. Hence it delights in the glory of form and colour, it touches the whole gamut of human emotions from the sublime to the tender. It includes the aesthetic as an essential factor.

and at the end of that period that creativity reasserted itself, bringing about a revolution in the intellectual and spiritual life of Europe and a rebirth (Renaissance) of man.

In monotheism on the other hand, instead of creative vitality, a dead fixity of form leading to stern orthodoxy and dogmatism contributed to the preservation of the creed.

Thus while polytheism has owed its continued existence to flexibility and the capacity for change and adjustment, monotheism has derived much strength from bigotry and fanaticism, distinguishing itself by the ruthless persecution and destruction of heretics and infidels.

The difference here is what M. Arnold discovered between Hebraism and Hellenism. Monotheism is characterised by "strictness of conscience" or severe conformity, and Polytheism by "spontaneity of consciousness" or independent perception and expression.

Sixthly, polytheism, the reaction of the free poetic soul to the aesthetic appeal of the universe, makes *imagination* the chief vehicle of expression. Hence it deals in concrete imagery which is representational, suggestive, and symbolical. Whereas monotheism, the firm discipline of the will leading to the acceptance of definite articles of faith, including chiefly a belief in heaven and a God in heaven, thinks in terms of *facts*. It is literal in its geographical and historical con-

ption. Its heaven is a place like any place on earth; to the monotheist there is no figure of speech or symbolism about it. God is a person like any human person. God's creation of the earth is an historical event that can be definitely dated. So is the birth of the Son of God according to monotheistic Christianity. No true Christian has attempted to interpret the birth of Christ or Virgin Motherhood as a mere figure of speech or symbol.

Thus while polytheism flies on the wings of imagination, monotheism is pinned down to facts. Disbelieve one of the facts and the whole structure of monotheism falls to pieces. If Jesus of Nazareth is not accepted as the Son of God or Moses or Mahomet as a Prophet of God, then the whole bottom out of their religions will be taken away. But polytheism will remain unaffected by considerations of fact and history. It makes no claim to historicity; it has nothing to do with facts and dates. Hence it has no quarrel with science, just as poetry has none. For example, if Darwin's theory of evolution is accepted then the whole doctrine of creation as given in the Christian Bible will fall through and the religion itself will face annihilation. But not so in the case of polytheism. If, for example, Darwinism opposes some creation theory in some Purana, it will have no effect on the religion, because the Purana is not understood literally and historically; it is taken imaginatively and

## IV Vedic Henotheism The Cult of the One in Many

There is a certain religious attitude which one comes across in different ages, and which is typical of the religion as found in the Vedas—the most ancient poetry of the world and the earliest and most characteristic expression of the spiritual idealism of the Aryan type of civilization—to which Max Müller gave the name Henotheism. Henotheism resembles monotheism in that it describes the Divinity as One. It resembles polytheism in that it contemplates the Divine as a God, or a Goddess, and Gods and Goddesses named by it are many. Often several are named together. But the Deity is not the same as in Semitic monotheisms, nor are the different Gods and Goddesses so well defined and individualized as in polytheistic cults.

Henotheism, as a religious creed, differs both from monotheism and polytheism. It differs from monotheism in that, though it believes in One God, it finds that this belief does not affect its contemplation of many Gods.

The speciality of Henotheism lies in this that there is a general devotional attitude towards the Divine, and this attitude remains unchanged even if the Deities addressed are changed.

Not only this, but by clear statement the different Deities are identified with One Deity (e.g. with Agni) or as the One Divine (*ekam*). And in such identification

the difference of number or gender is ignored. Thus Henotheism is the worship of the One Divinity in many names and forms.

'Heno' is Greek for 'one'. 'Henotheism' means the belief in One God, but as its features are different from monotheism where 'mono' also means one, the new term has been coined. The Vedic expression for the One Divinity is '*ekam*' which has been spoken of as Advaita ('not two'). So we may describe Henotheism as '*Advaitist Theism*' and distinguish it from the general Advaitist philosophy which tries to prove the unity not of God only, but of all orders of reality.

Two essential aspects of Henotheism arrest our attention.

*First, the subjective aspect.* If we consider the attitude of the worshipper, the cult appears to be monotheistic, in the philosophical sense. Every Vedic prayer is born in a spiritual mood, a praying attitude, in which the mind receives the vision of the Divine. This attitude and this feeling remain constant, though the contents of the vision vary. This psychological factor provides the point of unity.

*Secondly, the objective aspect.* If we were to ignore the subjective feeling and contemplate the multiplicity of forms, the cult would look like simple polytheism. Hence observed externally, in relation to the form, the Vedic cult would appear polytheistic except for the

amorphous character of the Deities. It is usual nowadays to describe it as polytheism. The description, as a purely formal one, is not quite inaccurate. But it loses sight of the spirit, and it is the spirit which is its chief point and which gives the cult its characteristic speciality.

Considering the spirit we find that one important difference between Vedic Henotheism and polytheism is that Vedic Deities do not combine in their character virtue and vice, goodness and evil like polytheistic Gods and Goddesses. All of them are good. Each represents the highest moral standard conceivable by the poet.

Not only is there no moral defect, but there is no aesthetic defect either, in the Vedic Deities. No Vedic God or Goddess is *deformed or decrepit*. All are beautiful and noble.

Here we find the secret of the identification of one Deity with another. In form the Deities are many, but in spirit they are one. This is the basis of Henotheism as a religious cult.

### THE AESTHETIC FACTOR

In the Vedas each vision of the Divinity carries an aesthetic value for it is a vision of beauty and splendour. As a religious attitude it is what the Bhagavad Gita calls 'Vibhuti Yoga'—the path of splendour. The typical form of the splendour is light (Jyoti, Bhargas) and in the more abstract sense, glory

( Mahiman ), greatness ( Mahas ) as well as loveliness ( Sri ), beauty ( Vapus ), wonder ( Shravas ) etc. According to this outlook the Divinity is Deva, ' the shining one ' or ' the glorious one ' Thus the conception of Divinity becomes primarily a generic idea, and secondarily the idea of an individual deity. Hence there is no essential contradiction in identifying one specific deity with another, so long as the generic idea remains constant.

### THE ETHICAL FACTOR

The Vedic deity embodies the ethical value as much as the aesthetic. There are two basic terms in the Vedas indicating their ethical value—Satya ( truth ) and Rita ( eternal order, discipline of eternal law, goodness ). It may be said that there can be no god or goddess in the Vedas who does not represent the conceptions of Satya ( truth ) and Rita ( eternal order ).

God is Satya Dharman, ' one for whom truth is the law of Being,' Satya Siva, ' one for whom truth is the source of power,' Satyasya Sunu ' son of truth, and so on, and finally He is ' the truth '—Satyam or in the metaphysical sense, Sat, reality. Similarly God is Ritavan, upholder of eternal order, and goddess Ritavari protectress of eternal law, and a deity is, in the abstract, Ritam—eternal order, truth.

This takes, theism to some fundamentals which can be contemplated as ends in themselves without reference

to a Divinity. Hence Vedic theism is based on an elementary moral standard which, as in the case of Buddhism, may be upheld in a non theistic way too. So in India it is not the atheist who is really objectionable, but the person who repudiates moral law (Dharma). The earth, according to the Vedas, is upheld not by the will of a God, but by truth (Satya)<sup>1</sup> of which God is the supreme exponent. Similarly the Veda says that God reveals Himself through Rita (order, truth)<sup>2</sup>.

God is supreme because He represents not only the beauty and splendour of Nature but also all virtue, all goodness, all nobility in man and woman at its highest (This is another form of Vibhuti Yoga). So, in the Vedic prayers, there are descriptive terms for the Divinity which are in the superlative form, though the deities named are different. Thus, whether in one name or another, the Divinity in the Vedas has been spoken of as the supreme poet (Kavitama), the supreme hero (Viratama), as the supremely beneficent (Shantama), etc.; similarly as the supreme father (Pitritama), the supreme mother (Matritama), and so on. Now, to an intellectual man, the superlative can imply only one individual, hence when two deities are described by the same superlative, the implication is that they are the same. For example, when Agni and Brahmanaspati are both spoken of as Vipratama, the supreme sage,

1 *Rigveda*, V 85 1

2 " VIII 100 4



then, as the superlative adjective indicates one person, so Agni and Brahmanaspati are one divine Being by implication

### THE METAPHYSICAL FACTOR ONE ESSENCE

The Oneness of the Divine, implied through the psychological and ethical factors, is also presented in the Veda as a definite metaphysical proposition. It is clearly stated that 'the One Being the sages contemplate in many ways—*Ekam shantam bahudha kalpantyanti* (*Rig Veda*, X 114 5) . Sometimes it is said that all gods are one in Indra ( e g , *Rig Veda* III 54 17 ) or in Agni (*Rig Veda*, II 1 ), and sometimes one God is described as All God ( *Vishva Deva* ). The following well known verse sets down the henotheistic principle in clear language

They speak of Indra Mitra Varuna Agni and there are the divine Suparna and Carutmat. The One Being the wise call by many names ( *Ekam and vipra bahudha vadanti* ) as Agni Yama Matarishvan ( *Rig Veda* I 164 46 )

But here, as a close observation will show the conception of the Divine becomes metaphysical, because the Divinity is spoken of in the neuter as One Being ( *Ekam sat* ) . This method is not casual it has been frequently used in the Vedas and is, in fact, the metaphysical foundation of Vedic theism. The idea does not occur only in the first and tenth cycles of the *Rig Veda* ( supposed to be later ) but elsewhere too. The following occurs in *Rig Veda*, III. 54 8 'One All

## Approaching the Divine through the Joy of Soul.

अग्नि मन्द पुष्टयिषे

शीर पावकशोनिषम् ।

दृद्धि मन्त्रेभि रीमेहे ॥ ऋ ८-४३-३१

"We worship with joyous hearts the joyous Deity, dear to all, effulgent, holy, purifying." (Rig viii. 43 31)

There is a sacredness in our highest joy, corresponding to the infinite joy in the Divine. Hence a medium of approach to the Divine is the joy of the soul.

The conception of the joy of a stainless soul seeking the stainless joy of the Divine is typically Aryan. According to it man is not borne down under the burden of sin. His is not a worship in penitence. It is the opening of the flood gates of a joyous soul before the radiant glory of the Source of all joy.

Vedic poetry is typical of this joyous out pouring of a lofty spirit. The Vedic hymns have been rightly compared in the Veda itself to streams gushing out of mountains :

गिरिभ्रजो नोर्मयो भदन्तो ।

ध्रुवस्यतिमस्य १ वा अनारन् ॥ ऋ. १०।६८।१

"Like merry streamlets bursting from the mountain, to Brihaspati our hymns have sounded."

'Apas' ( waters ) are That, Prājapati is That ' (*Shukla. Up. VIII, 27*).

In another Yajur Veda verse ( 328 ) the Divinity is spoken of in the neuter as Tat Sat ( That Being ) in the first line, and as the Lord ( Vibhu ) in the masculine in the second. Here is the Advaitic theism of the Vedas. The unity of God does not mean that there is only one individual in the species called God, but that the Divinity is supreme and all-pervading and all reality becomes unified in Him. "Yatra vishvam bhavatyekamīdam"—'In whom all find one nest' ( *Yajur Veda, 328* ) This Advaita includes monotheism in the simple philosophical sense; as for example the *Sama Veda* says—

Come, ye all, with your spiritual might ( Ojas ), together to the Lord of glory ( Div ), the only One, who indeed, is the Guest of men, He is the First, to Him who desires us, all pathways turn. He is in truth, the only One ( *Sama I, 1, 372* )

The *Atharva Veda* ( XIII ) puts the idea arithmetically

To him who knows this God simply as One  
Neither second nor third nor fourth is He called;  
( Nor fifth nor sixth nor seventh etc )  
He oversees all—what breathes and what breathes not,  
To Him goes the conquering power.

But the idea takes a more comprehensive turn with what follows—

He is the One, the One alone,  
In him all deities become One alone

Here philosophical monotheism develops into henotheism. Monotheism understands One God, One ruling over all, but beyond it lies the conception of henotheism—of the One in many, and the many in the One—this is Vedic Advaita.

Philosophers, by the application of logic, may try to reduce the proposition to simple monism—that the One is real and the many unreal, but the Vedic Advaita is much more than monism, it lies beyond the logic of monism. *It takes its stand on a mystical experience in which the One is real and the many too are real and the many find their unity in the One.*

Those who accept mysticism can alone penetrate into the conception of the One in the many—as in the following

Aditi is the sky Aditi the mid region  
Aditi the mother, the father the son  
Aditi all deities the five-classed men,  
Aditi is all that is born all that will be born

(*Rigveda* I 82 10)

Here is a conception that goes beyond time and space. In the following the logical sense of quantity is superseded

And both the seas are in Varuna's loins  
And He lies in this small drop of water

(*Atharvaveda* IV 163)

The all-pervasiveness of the One is poetically conceived not only in the cosmic world but also in the

world of man The following is addressed to Brahman, the neuter term for the Divinity

Thou art man Thou art woman Thou art the boy  
Thou the maiden  
Thou art the old man tottering with the staff  
Thou existest on all sides

( *All arta ida* X 8 27 )

The Veda has not, to any the least extent ignored the individual vision of the Divine—whether in the masculine or the feminine or the neuter, whether in the singular, the dual, or the plural Hence it has maintained the poetry of particular experiences Agni is the One existence—Ekam—but he is contemplated in the masculine so Ushas though one (Ekam), is contemplated in the feminine as in the following

One (Ekam mas) is Agni kindled in many a place One (Ekam mas) is Surya shining over all

One (Ekam fem) is Ushas illumining all this That which is One (Ekam neuter) has become This All (Sarvam neuter)

( *Prigveda* VIII 58 2 )

This is the way of poetry and of mysticism The theism of it is only the intellectual interpretation We call it henotheism in the absence of a better name available in English

#### THE RITUALISTIC FACTOR ONE SINGLE RITE

The Vedic ritual (Yajna) is in keeping with its henotheistic character Unlike the polytheistic or fetishistic ritual, it is one uniform ceremonial without

reference to the deity worshipped. Whatever the deity worshipped, the ritual is the same. The same oblation or libation is offered, though, in the accompanying prayer, one or many gods may be mentioned.

One important difference from the ritualistic point of view between Vedic henotheism and polytheism is this: that henotheism has made poetry and music alone its media of expression,† whereas, polytheism has used plastic arts including sculpture. Sculpture so thoroughly particularizes a deity that the logical anomaly of identifying one deity with another becomes a formidable difficulty here. For example, the masculine Agni and Surya and the feminine Ushas are spoken of as Ekam—One, in the neuter. In visual arts such identification cannot be effected. Hence Vedic henotheism, inasmuch as it substitutes one deity for another and identifies all deities with One Essence (in the neuter gender) cannot possibly fix the deities into definite plastic forms.

Vedic deities are visions, but formless. They have received embodiment only in the poetry of the Vedas. When we read of Ushas—‘the daughter of the sky,’

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† cf. *Rig Veda* X 71 11. ‘One plies his task by reciting the verses. One sings the sacred hymn in Sakviri measures.’

One, the man of wisdom speaks of the knowledge of the existing things, and one lays down the rules of Yajna.’

Here four methods of religious practice are mentioned: recitation, singing, the path of knowledge and Yajna.

'like the bride decked by her mother,' the last thing we should do is to imagine the female figure of a deity concealed somewhere in the sky, who appears on occasions to mortals whom she favours. This is polytheism and this is where Vedic Advaita or henotheism differs from polytheism §

### THE SOCIAL FACTOR

The social grouping of the Veda is in accordance with its principle of unity in diversity. It recognizes the division of society into four types—the man of

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§ Some of the images in Vedic poetry are not capable of being reduced to definite forms. For example the famous description of Purusha—the Cosmic Person—as 'thousand beaded, thousand-eyed thousand footed' is not the description of a figure because, for one thing the Vedas do not entertain the grotesque—all gods are beautiful for another, the super-subtle Vedic poet should not be supposed to be imagining an equal number of heads and eyes. (The emendation of *Atharva Veda* here changing 'thousand headed' into 'thousand banded' was unnecessary because the *Rig Veda* did not conceive a form.)

Similarly, the description of Indra as both father and mother can lead in the case of sculpture to only an artistic freak like 'Ardhanarishvara' which will be repugnant to the Vedic spirit. Similarly the sculptural representation of the Vedic symbol for the ultimate—Suparna—the beautiful winged (bird)—will destroy its poetry and philosophy and leave in its place mere totemism. Similar will be the case with descriptions of the Divinity as Vrisha—the bull or Varaha—the boar—terms that indicate nobility and greatness.

knowledge and religion (Brahmin), the man of politics and warfare (Kshatriya), the man of trade and industry (Vaishya), and the working man (Shudra), but it says that all of them are limbs of the Cosmic Being: that they are respectively the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Purusha. This means in philosophical language, that the Shudra, the Vaishya, the Kshatriya, and the Brahmin, though separated by quality and occupation, are the same in spirit. This is another instance of the many in One. It is social Advaita.

Equally interesting is the social application of the principle of Vedic henotheism in respect of members of other religions. The hymn to the Earth in the *Atharva Veda* recognizes the variety of men and creeds on the earth. Janam bibhrati bahudha vivachasam nanadhar manam prithvi yathaukasam—'The earth that bears people speaking varied language, with various religious rites (Dharma) according to the places of abode' (*Atharva Veda*, XII 145).

We find the antithesis between Arya and Dasa or Dasyu in the Vedas, but the antithesis is stated as one between enlightenment and ignorance, goodness and wickedness, lawful life and lawlessness. The Veda, unlike Buddhism, preaches open battle against all forces of evil. Indra, the supreme Being, is also supreme as a fighter against evil—he is described as Vritrahan tama, the supreme among killers of Vritra, the power of darkness. But no question of the 'infidel' is raised by



the idea. On the other hand, it is stated that the enemy, whether our kin or a foreigner, should be valiantly opposed (*Rig Veda* VI. 75.19) The evil-doer from the ranks of the forward-marching people must be eliminated (*Rig Veda*, X 53.9) It is also said that God is the God of Dasa as well as of Arya—Yasyayam vishva arya dasah shevadhīpa arih—‘Lord God of glory is He to whom both Arya and Dasa belong’ (*Rig Veda*, VIII. 51.1) There is a prayer for the forgiveness of sins against the foreigner (*Rig Veda*, V. 85.7)

The *Atharva Veda* says God is of the foreigner (Videshya) as much as of our own land (Samdeshya) (IV 16.8)

So the principle of unity in diversity covers all human relations.

There are Mantras which extend this principle to all living beings (Sarvani Bhutani) (*Yajur Veda*, 36.18) till at last we come to a grand conception of universal peace and serenity—the harmony with Nature (Sarvam Shantih) (*Yajur Veda*, 36.17)

Thus it will be found that Vedic henotheism or Advaitic theism is not a casual creed, it is comprehensive in its application to life. People worshipped deities of their own. Polytheism synthesized them into a pluralistic pantheon in which every deity was recognized as divine, with, of course, qualitative differences. So Roman polytheism absorbed Greek and Egyptian gods within its religious creed. Hindu polytheism absorbs

different kinds of gods and goddesses of different sects and tribes. But something different and subtler and grander had been done ages before them by Vedic Aryans. *They accepted all the different deities that were worshipped, but synthesized them as manifestations of One Divinity*, so that any one of them could be identified with any other or all the rest. Only a mind of the highest subtlety and accustomed to the mystical apprehension of reality could be conceived to be capable of this. In the following verses (out of many) which occur in the beginning of the second cycle of *Rig Veda*, an ideal of religious synthesis was set up, which only the greatest saints and sages of the world in the long after ages have been able to grasp. The poet worships the deity Agni, but he finds that there are other deities, male and female, like Indra, Varuna, and so on, which other sages have worshipped. He says:

Thou O Agni! art Indra the Hero of heroes  
Thou art Vishnu of the mighty stride, adorable  
Thou O Brahmanaspati art Brahman who knows

Thou O Sustainer tenderest us with wisdom power, (3)  
Thou, O Agni art King Varuna whose laws stand fast  
Thou as Mitra, wonder worker art adorable

Thou art Atyaman Lord of heroes encircling all  
O Thou God! Thou liberal Ansha in the synod (4)

Thou, God Agni art Aditi to the offerer of oblation  
Thou Hotra Bharati, art glorified by the song

For conferring power Thou art the hundred wintered Ila  
Thou Lord of wealth, art Vritra slayer and Sarasvati, (II)

( *Rig Veda*, II 1 )

Some Orientalists have held the opinion that in the Vedas there is really nothing like henotheism, that is simply polytheism; only, owing to the peculiar primitive mentality of the worshipper, every deity is flattered as the Supreme Deity. But the term henotheism should not imply merely the description of every deity as the Supreme Deity, it must also account for the identification of one deity with another, or of one deity with all the rest as in the above quoted passage, or of one deity or all deities with the abstract divine essence, in the neuter form. Is there anything like this in polytheism? Can you speak of Apollo as Hermes, or of Hera as Athene, or of Apollo as Zeus, Hermes, Hera and Athene? Never has polytheism, ancient or modern, spoken in the manner of the Veda, of the One in the Many and the Many in the One.

### HENOtheISM IN POST VEDIC AGES

The henotheistic cult, though a speciality of the Vedas, is found in later ages too. For example, we find a number of medieval sages in India preaching this idea in their own way that God is one, though called by different people in different ways. Ordinarily, it is toleration of other people's gods. But the Vedic sage's attitude is not simply one of toleration, but of acceptance, and it is not only the acceptance of another's God with the hospitality of polytheism, but acceptance of all gods.

imagined by all other sages as identical with one's own—the one Deity without a second

We read about Sri Ramakrishna that part of his religious experience was the contemplation of the Divinity according to the conception to different sects and religions. Here we find, in our times, a religious phenomenon of the same type as Vedic henotheism of contemplating the Divine not only in terms of one's own God but of everybody else's God

Thus henotheism, in its Vedic sense, is not a simple religious theory, but part of a deep spiritual experience.

The working of the henotheistic principle is found in the synthetic part of the Avatar theory—that all Avatars are incarnations of the same deity. The result of this is the resolution of age long sectarian differences. Rama and Parashurama were Kshatriya and Brahmin heroes in opposition, but in the melting-pot of Avatar theology both are incarnations of Vishnu. Even Buddha the rebel against Brahminism, became, by this process, an Avatar, and hence the conflict of ages was attempted to be composed not by simple toleration but by acceptance. This is the way—though a popular way—of henotheism or Advaitic theism

The success of henotheism as a religious cult will depend on the fulfilment of the essential conditions including the principles enumerated above: (1) that the worshipper must bring a pure, prayerful mind; (2)

that whatever deity he entertains should be conceived in terms of truth, goodness, and beauty, (3) that the metaphysical basis of unity in diversity should be securely established, (4) that the ritual should be in keeping with the idea of unity, and (5) that the unity should not remain a mere abstract idea but must find a concrete form in terms of social life, both internal and international. Henotheism, therefore, can apply only to highly cultured concepts of religion.

### CONCLUSION

From our examination of the different religious concepts regarding the Divinity we come to the conclusion that there are different attitudes that one religion could take up in respect of another. One is that of monotheism with its exclusive claim of its God as the only God then there is the method of accumulation followed by polytheism, in which all types of deities imagined at different times by different people are entertained and fostered and allowed to exercise whatever influence they can on the religious life of the people, and finally there is the method of spiritual synthesis adopted by henotheism, in which there is no mere toleration, no mere hospitality to the other's God, but acceptance of the other's God as one's own and as the One Divinity. This last is logically puzzling, but it has been part of the mystic experience of great sages and saints of all times

Thus while polytheism is a federation of different grades of theism, monotheism, in its accepted religious sense, carries the imperialistic challenge of one social group against all other groups. But a plurality of monotheisms, by its very logic, creates a situation in which constant conflict is the rule of life. The remedy for this lies in henotheism—the acceptance of one another's God as the One Divinity and trying to perfect the knowledge of That through spiritual effort and mystical experience. This henotheistic or Advaitic theism has worked as a powerful force in the spiritual life of India, though in its comprehensive form it is a special feature of the Vedas.

## V Some Basic Principles of the Vedic Religion

It may be said of the different religious sects originating in India that the thing that matters most with them is not so much what one believes as how one behaves, not so much the intellectual acceptance as the moral conduct and the spiritual build. The basis of religion, then, is the moral law with spiritual discipline guiding life. The common term for this law and this discipline is Dharma, a word cognate with *form* in English. Dharma is the ideal form of conduct.

Vedic theism presupposes the existence of Dharman (an older form of the term), meaning, the eternal Law. For example, it is said of Vishnu that 'He upholds the eternal statutes (Dharman)' (Rg I, 22. 18). Agni

has been described as the 'President of eternal laws'—*Adhyaksha dharmanām* (*Rg VIII 43 24*) The *Atharva Veda* speaks of the earth as 'upheld by *Dharman*—eternal law' *Ath. XII. 1. 17*).

The *Mahabharata* wants to give the root meaning of the word *Dharma*. It says

'Because it upholds, it is called *Dharma*, *Dharma* upholds the creation'

( *Karnaparva, 69 59* )

Lord Buddha popularized the term in its Pali form, *Dhamma*, signifying eternal moral principles, unconnected with, and independent of, one's faith in the divinity

Thus *Dharma* stands for the fundamentals of religion, the ideal form of conduct that was accepted as the foundation of right living by all religious orders in ancient India, whether theistic, atheistic, or agnostic. The contents of *Dharma* are more or less taken for granted by the people from tradition or from the general outlook of a particular religious order. Latter day leaders of religion, have, as a rule, defined their concepts in detail. It would be interesting to find a comprehensive definition of *Dharma* in early religious literature—of the basic principles that are believed to uphold society. -

Such a definition of the contents of *Dharma*—of what upholds the earth—is found in the '*Atharva Veda*

(though the word Dharma has not been used in the passage),

सत्यं ब्रह्म कर्तव्यं उग्रं दीक्षा तपे ।

ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति

' Truth, Eternal Order that is great and stern, consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual—these uphold the earth ' *Ath. XII. 1 1* )

These six, then according to the Vedic ideal are the fundamentals of religion. Let us consider them

### 1 Truth

It is important to note that the Veda places truth first and ritual last in religion. This is not without its special significance, for in every age in the history of the Vedic religion ungrudging supremacy has been conceded to truth, and there is nothing in that religion like articles of faith. In every age the problem has been to find out *truth* and not to stick to *belief*. Every period of Indian history has had its sage and seeker after truth and the sincerity and freedom of their minds have been responsible for the maintenance of the philosophical outlook.

In the Vedas truth has been described as the essence of divinity. ' *Savitā satyadharmā* ' The Deity has truth as the law of His being,' says the *Atharva Veda* (*Ath. VII. 24 1*). The *Rig Veda* calls the Deities manifestations of truth.



'the three and thirty Deities the manifestations of Truth, saw You Two (Asvins) approach Truth (Rg VIII 57 2)

Elsewhere in the *Rig Veda* the Deity has been described as true (Rg I 1 5 1 29 1) Ultimately, in religion, as understood in ancient India, it is not so much a question of theism and atheism as it is one of truth and untruth

'Let us worship Indra the True (*satya*) and not untruth (*anrita*)' (Rg VIII 62 12) A sage defends himself by saying that he did not make untruth (*anrita*) his gods (Rg VII 104 14)

Prayer and ritual of the right type come out of a truthful life and true heart The libation of Soma flows—'speaking truth, truthful in action'—*satyam vadaṁ satyakarmaṇ* (Rg IX 113 4) The path of religious progress is the path of truth An Upanishadic sage says

By truth is the divine path laid out  
by which sages, having obtained  
what they desire  
ascend the supreme abode of Truth

(*Mundaka Up* III 1 6)

The Atman he says, is to be realized through truth—*satyena labhyah* (*Mundaka Up.* III 1. 5)  
And with supreme confidence he declares

सत्यम् एव जयते नानृतम्

It is Truth alone that conquers and not untruth  
*Mundaka Up* III.1 6 )

Truth in its moral sense is truthfulness, integrity, in a metaphysical sense it signifies reality, and Satya becomes Sat Satya applies to conduct Sat is an object of search of knowledge or realization and vision Hence the Upanishadic prayer 'Lead me from unreality ( *asat* ) to reality ( *sat* ) ( *Bṛihadaranyaka*, I 3 28 ) But Sat as a metaphysical entity is abstruse and mystical Sometimes a sage makes a modest inquiry

' Unknowing I ask of those who  
 know—the sages—

as one ignorant for the sake of knowledge

What was that One in the form of  
 the Unborn ? ( *Rg* I 164 6 )

The question persists even in worship

' Who is God whom we shall worship with our  
 oblation ? ( *Rg* X 121 )

The sage of the *Yajur Veda* records his vision of Sat, in which the universe is united as birds in a nest { *Y. VS* 32 8 } Sage to sage the knowledge passes like the information about an unknown land from traveller to traveller

One ignorant of the land asks of one  
 who knows it ,

he travels forward, instructed by the  
 knowing one ( *Rg* X 32 7 )

A traveller who has yet a long way to go may, with just modesty, remain silent about 'Sat, the Reality. One may even adopt with Buddha the attitude of reserve regarding the ultimate Reality. But with Satya, truth, it is different. Satya is our concern at every moment of life. The Vedic sage has contemplated a state beyond Sat and Asat, reality and unreality. "Then (at the beginning) there was neither unreality (asat) nor reality (sat) (Rg. \. 129. 1) ~ But one cannot contemplate a state when there is no truth. Truth as a value of life is abiding and ultimate. By truth is the earth upheld, says the *Rig Veda* (Rg X 85 1. also *Ath* XIV. 1, 1) 'Quicken truth'—Satyam jñwa—says the *Yajur Veda*. A sage of the Upanishad begins his spiritual disquisition by asserting 'Satyam vadishyāmi, 'I will speak the truth

## 12 Order (*Rita*)

(v) The ethic aspect of Order

The first essential of Dharma, then, is Truth. The second is *Rita*, Eternal Order, Eternal Law. The word is obsolete in modern times, but its negative *anrita* (Rg I 105 6), meaning, literally, disorder or chaos, has been used from ancient times as the negative of truth. In its moral aspect *Rita* is often synonymous with truth. So 'Ritam vadishyāmi, 'I will speak the Eternal Law' and 'Satyam vadishyāmi, 'I will speak the truth', mean practically the same thing. '*Rita* and *Satya*' are spoken of by the *Rig Veda* as being

'born in the beginning of things out of perfect spiritual ardour'. (Rg X: 110 1) As Satya upholds the earth, so does Rita uphold the heavens. (Rg X. 85 1.). In the offering of the Soma libation the sage speaks of Soma as 'declaring Law (Rita), splendid by Law (Rita), truth-speaking, truthful in action' (Rg. IX 113 4). We must 'praise' 'Eternal Order' - (Ritam samasantah) and think in a straight way (Rg X 66. 2)

Rita, in its moral aspects, however, is wider than truth, it includes justice and 'goodness and is almost synonymous with Dharma as an ethical concept. So Rita is opposed to 'evil, and the 'opposition is severe, therefore it is spoken of as 'stern and fierce' (ugram). It has been said 'The wicked tread not the 'path of Eternal Law' (Rita) (Rg IX 73 6)

The following is addressed to Brihaspati, who rides the awful car of Rita, destroying evil.

' Having chased the wicked ones and  
darkness

Thou mountest Thy refulgent car of  
order (Rita)

The awful car, O Brihaspati that  
subdues the foe,

Slays the wicked, cleaves the stall and  
bring the light' (Rg II. 23 3)

(b) Rita as Cosmic Order,

Rita, like Satya, forms an essential part of the conception of the divinity. A god is 'Ritāvan,' a goddess 'Ritāvari', Guardian of the Law. Here *Rita* has a wider implication than morality, it stands for cosmic order, for the immutable law of nature, by which the universe becomes systematized and integrated and avoids chaos and confusion. Gods chant the song of *Rita*, says the Veda (*Rg* I 147, 1). In one verse the divinity is identified with *Rita*. (*Rg* IV 40 5, also Y. VS X. 24). As on the moral plane *Rita* leads to the triumph of goodness over evil, so on the cosmic plane it leads to the triumph of light over darkness. It is said of Indra that—

'He, shining, caused to shine what shone not,  
by Law (*Rita*) he lighted up the dawns  
He moves with steeds yoked by Eternal  
Order (*Rita*)  
making man happy, by the chariot drive  
that finds the light (*Rg* VI, 39 4)

There is, then, a coordination between natural law and moral law. Good life, which is life lived according to *Rita* as moral Law is cognate with the cosmic law governing nature. 'We will follow the path of goodness like the sun and the moon, says a Rig Vedic sage. Happiness comes from treading this path. 'Lead us beyond all pain and grief,' so runs the prayer, 'along the path of eternal law (*Rita*)' (*Rg* X 133).

The man of faith is really one who has understood and accepted the Eternal Law ( Rita ), and the atheist is one who does not believe in the eternal values, and does not stand for goodness and oppose evil, according to eternal law. Vritra whom Indra destroys is the power of darkness and evil who obstructs the working of Rita. The Dasa and Dasyu are 'followers of different statutes inhuman (*anya vrata amanausha*)' ( Rg \ 22 8 VIII 70 11 ). What is revelation but the awareness of the working of eternal Law in nature and life ?

One and another say : There is no Indra. Who has seen him ? Whom shall we worship ?

I exult O singer ! Look at me here. All that exists I surpass in grandeur. The commandants of eternal Law ( Rita ) make me mighty. When I rend I rend the worlds asunder. ( Rg VIII 100 34 )

The sceptic who complains of not having seen Indra is asked to see him *here (sha)*—in the universe itself through the splendour and the order emanating from the working of the Law and the severity of the moral rule.

### (c) The aesthetic aspect of Rita

Rita that reduces chaos to cosmos, and gives order and integration to matter also gives it symmetry and harmony. Hence the concept on of Rita has an aesthetic content too. It implies splendour and beauty. For

example, when in obedience to Law the rains break, the 'fountains' that 'bubbling, stream forward' are 'young virgins skilled in Law' (*Rg.* IV. 19. 7). Nature becomes beautiful through conformity to Law. The lovely Dawn (*Ushas*) 'true to Eternal Order,' is 'sublime by Law' (*Rg.* V. 80. 1); 'the youthful Maiden breaks not the laws of Eternal Order by coming, day to day to her tryst' (*Rg.* I. 123. 9)

So *Rita* that holds together the cosmos through natural law is the discipline of life through moral law; and it is also the discipline of form that makes beauty

' Firm seated are Eternal Law's foundations,  
In its fair form are many splendid  
beauties ' (*Rg.* IV. 23. 9.)

It is for this reason that the Vedic gods upholding *Rita* are all lawful, and beautiful and good. Their beauty is a significant attribute. Terms implying beauty like *Sri* (beauty, splendour), *Bhargas* (glory), *Vapus* (beautiful form), *Vama* (lovely), *Charu* (beautiful), *Chitra* (wonderful) are frequently used for the Deities

In the following verse there is a vision of *Agni* as the beautiful One

' O wonderful One, O Lord of wonders !  
{ Give us what is most wonderful,  
} life-giving.  
O bright One, with Thy brightness,-  
give to Thy singer

great wealth, brilliant, with many  
heroes ( *Rg VI 6 7* )

Similarly, Varuna represents the beautiful form  
(*rūpa*) that lies behind the cosmic order

' He, the supporter of the world of life  
who knows the secret names of the  
beams of the dawn

He, Poet (*Kavi*), cherishes manifold  
forms (*rūpa*) by his poetic  
power (*Kāvya*) ' ( *Rg VIII 41 5* )

Of Indra it is said that He is beautiful as the  
heaven to look on ' and is ' an active dancer ' who  
attracts by beauty (*Sri*) ( *Rg VI 29 3* )

The beauty created by Indra through the applica-  
tion of cosmic order is spoken of in the following verses

' Thou who by Eternal Law (*Dharman*)  
hast spread about flowering  
and seed bearing plants, and streams  
of water,

Thou who hast generated the matchless  
lightning in the sky

Thou vast, encompassing vast realms '  
art a fit subject for our song ' ( *Rg II 13 7* )

( *Rg II 13 7* )

The aesthetic approach to reality illustrates the  
highest refinement of the mind and the finest culture  
And what delicate moral impressions on character must



be produced by the representation of the beauty and charm of young womanhood in terms of divine grace and holiness ! On every sensitive mind the imagery must imprint itself in all its sacredness and sublimity the conception of womanhood beyond anything that moral exhortations and prohibitions can achieve. We assist at visions of Ushas as ' the noble lady ' ( *Rg* I. 48 5 ) as one ' who goes like a maiden in pride of beauty, smiling, youthful, brightly shining ' ( *Rg* I. 123 10 ), as one ' who is lovely as a bride adorned by her mother ' ( *Rg* I. 123 11 ), as the beauty who ' as if conscious of her bright limbs after bathing stands erect, desiring, as it were, that we should see her ' ( *Rg* V 80 5 ), as ' the Daughter of the sky, bending opposite to men like a virtuous maiden ' ( *Rg* V 80 6 ), as one ' who like a dancer enrobes herself with her embroidered garments ' ( *Rg* I 92 4 ), as the Maiden who ' bending down, clothed in a red form, is seen advancing as one wonderful ' ( *Rg* VIII 101 13 ) and as the Goddess, the bringer of light, whom poets welcome with the singing of hymns ' ( *Rg* V 80 1 ), To Ushas, the Maiden, the poets wish to be ' as sons to the mother ' ( *Rg* VII 81 4 )

The beauty of Ushas is the beauty of the maiden, the beauty of Saraswati is that of the mother. And not only has the woman's loveliness been enshrined in the portraiture of the Goddess, but it has also been called up through simile or metaphor to illustrate divine

attributes. There are fine vignettes of mother and child in the references to 'the mother bending to feed her child' ( *Rg* II 33 10 ), of 'the mother kissing her child and the child returning the kiss' ( *Rg* \ 114 4 ), of 'babes in arms reposing on their mother' ( *Rg* VII. 43. 3 ), of 'playful children, whose mothers are handsome : ' s śula na krīlavah sumātarāṇ ' ( *Rg* \ 78 6 ) \*

By revealing the beauty that lies at the core of the cosmic order ( *Rg* IV 23 9 ), the Vedic sages uplifted the mind of man to unimaginable heights. And in a way that only very modern minds can properly understand, he hold on the aesthetic also stabilized the fundamentalst of character and moral living more durably than mere moral preaching can do. One who learnt to admire the divine beauty of the woman did not need the ordinary social taboos to keep him straight in his moral character. For the woman also there is not much by way of exhortation to virtue but beautiful pictures present the ideal for all times. For example, speaking of the purity of the Deity, the sage says that He is 'like the irreproachable wife beloved of her husband' ( *Rg* I 73 3 ). So, in the eyes of the Veda there is divine purity in the chaste wife loved by her husband.

In a succession of verses Savita is implored to 'send far away all evil,' and 'send what is good' then

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\* The follow ng calls up a picture of father and child

\* I grasp Thy garment as a child  
grasps his father's ( *Rg* III 53 2 )

he is asked to grant ' all things that are beautiful,' and then he is spoken of as one ' Whose power is in truth ' ( *Rg V 82 5 7* ) Thus the Deity is understood in terms of goodness, beauty and truth—the three ultimate values Usha, the beautiful One, ' obedient to the reins of Order ( Rita ), is implored to send ' thoughts that are ' more ' and more blissful ' ( *Rg I 123 13* ) Thus beauty, an aspect of Rita as cosmic law, is, so to speak, only the obverse of Rita as moral law So form as beauty ( Rūpa ) and form as morality ( Dharma ) are harmonized by the contemplation of a universal ( Brihat ) order ( Rita )

#### (d) Rita as Rite

The term Rita has also been applied to the Vedic ritual It has been observed that Rita is *rite* as well as *right* As a ritual Rita signifies the orderly performance of the ceremonial part of the worship which is a complicated form of acting, and therefore possesses the attributes of art So like the aesthetic form the form of the Yajna also conforms to laws of order And the order observed at the ritual is a symbol of Eternal Order, including the eternal statutes of moral life The material for the ritual, Soma juices, is invoked in the following words

' O Purifiers '

driving off the lawless looking at the light

Sit in the place of the sacred rite

( Rita ) ' ( *Rg VIII 13 9* )

' Let not the licentious enter the place of worship,'  
 { *rita* } says another verse { *Rg VII 21 5* } The  
 Soma libations flowing ' in streams of *Rita*,' are asked  
 ' to glorify the Deity as they make the whole world  
 noble ( *Arya* ) and drive away the lawless ' ( *Rg IX 63.*  
*5* ) *Rita* uplifts the spirit

' Ascending the lofty heights of Order ( *Rita* ) the  
 hands of singers sip the sweets of immortality,  
 { *Rg X 123 3* }

The earth is sweet to the man who lives by Law  
 ( *Ritāyate* ) ( *Rg I 90 6 8* )

It is interesting to note that while *Rita* as cosmic  
 and moral law is understood to be immutable and  
 eternal *Rita* as ritual is expected to vary with time and  
 to be renewed to suit the human desire for change

' *Navyo javatam ritam* let the new ritual grow'  
 ( *Rg I 105 15* )

#### (e) *Rita* as Social Order

In the Vedas every god or godless is spoken of as  
 the protector of *Rita* the cosmic order. More  
 particularly certain Deities are described as Kings who  
 are guardians of *Rita* and as *Kshatriyas*—protectors  
 and rulers. *Mitra* and *Varuna* have been spoken of as  
 such

Upholders of Eternal Order ( *Rita* )

Powerful, They have sat them down for sovereignty  
 ( *śamrajya* )

Rulers ( *Kshatriyas* ) whose laws stand fast

‘ They have obtained Their sway ( Kshatra )  
( *Rg. VIII. 25 8* ). ’

The emissaries of Varuna, ‘ upholders of Eternal Law,’ ‘ survey both the worlds,’ and ‘ inspire the praise songs of noble minded poets ’ ( *Rg VII. 87. 3* ). The sinner is caught in the noose of Varuna !

The earthly king makes Mitra and Varuna his models. Like them he wants to be an upholder of order ( Rita ) as applied to social life ; he therefore, calls himself a Kshatriya. In the *Yajur Veda* the king while receiving consecration is told

‘ Thou art Mitra, Thou art Varuna ’  
( *Y. VS. X 16* )

The Kshatriya is not only a protector, but, being a defender, is also a fighter. The Deity who represents the ideal of the fighter as well as the giver of law, is typically Indra. In Him the spirit of Kshatra finds its widest application

‘ Great art Thou, mighty Lord, through valour,  
obtaining wealth, O fierce One conquering the foes;  
Thyself alone the king of the whole universe,  
Such as Thou art, Thou causest battle and peace ’  
( *Rg I 154 4* )

‘ I deem Thee, Indra, as the Banner of heroes.’  
sings the sage, ‘ I deem Thee as the Chief of the people’  
( *Rg. VIII 96 4* )

There is a stirring call to the people to be heroes after the manner of Indra

इन्द्रम् सखाय अनुवीर्यध्वम्

( ऋ. १०।१०८।१, छा. ३३५ )

'Comrades, quit you like heroes after the example of Indra' 'Heaven and earth bow before Him before His might the mountains tremble' ( *Rg* II 12 13 )  
A great hero, He is also merciful But His grace comes out of His might

शुवसा दक्षिणावान्—'graceful through power'

( *Rg* VI 29 3 )

In Soma who has also been described as king the ideal of *Dakṣiṇā* or *grace* has found fine expression

'He clothes all those who are naked ( *nagna* )

He doctors all those who are diseased ;

The blind man sees, the cripple walks'

( *Rg* VIII 79 2 ,

Vishnu, 'the Upholder of eternal statutes ( *Dharmāni* ), the Herdsman ( *Gopā* )' ( *Rg* II 22 18 ) is also a typical representative of the ideal of royal and divine grace There are His 'three places, filled with sweetness, and imperishable joy with holy bliss ( *suasti* ) ( *Rg* I 154 4 )

The earthly king becomes a *kshatriya* protector, by applying his *Kshatra* ruling power to society, as the Divine kings apply their ruling power to the universe in accordance with *Rita* <sup>1</sup>

1 The ancient Persian king's name Artaxerxes is believed to be the same as *Ritakshatra*

)      *Rita and Fate.*

The ideal of society is to translate the order ( Rita ) of the cosmos into social order. Like the Greek conception of Fate, Rita does not derive its power from the will of the gods, but lies above divinity. But the Greeks found in Fate a power which even the gods could not withstand, which was arbitrary, and which foreordained the course of mortal life beyond the capacity of anybody to alter it. This led to the typical Greek conception of Tragedy that man was a helpless victim of Fate. In India, however, Rita never became foreordination, it remained Eternal Law and Eternal Justice. As a result, however, of the working of Eternal Justice there could be, no escape from the consequences of our deeds: a man must reap as he sows. So the conception of stern Rita led to the doctrine of Karma. With the detailed acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth, every soul was believed to be born with the residue of Karma of previous births (praktana) which, remaining unseen (adrishta), guided man's present life to happiness or misery according to Eternal Justice. Thus India too came near the Greek idea of predeterminism. But this was in later ages. In the Vedas there is no predeterminism. There is confident faith in man's capacity to follow the Rita in making order prevail against disorder, cosmos against chaos. The existence of evil is recognized, but it is believed that evil can be fought and fought successfully, within

us and without us. Indra's destruction of Vritra, the power of darkness and evil, which is opposed to Rita, is indicative of the final triumph of goodness and law over evil and disorder. Indra is Vritrabhanta, 'Supreme among slayers of Vritra.' Every man has his own Vritra to fight, he can fight successfully only if he is valiant enough. Thus the Vedic outlook is the heroic or epic outlook on life. Life is hard and there is evil in our midst, but victory is ours if only we are brave, and follow goodness resolutely

The river full of stones flows on

Move together, my comrades!

Stand erect and cross it.

Let us leave here those that are evil

(asevāh, we shall cross over

to powers of goodness (śivān)

(Rg X 53 8)

The *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda* reproduce the verse. The *Atharva Veda* substitutes the expression 'stand erect' (uttishthata) by the more emphatic, 'Virayaddhwam'—'Quit you like heroes!'

(f) Satya and Rita—Brahman and Ishatra

Satya in the metaphysical as well as the moral sense, and Rita in its broad (Brihat) sense, covering the cosmic, ethical, aesthetic, and social law, as well as the ritual, represent the higher interests of life. Satya stands for the religious philosophical interest, and Rita, in its typical sense, for the moral political inter-



est. The *Rig Veda* speaks of the threefold interests of life :

Strengthen the power of knowledge  
 (Brahman) and strengthen minds;  
 Strengthen the ruling power (Kshatra)  
 and strengthen heroes,  
 Give strength to the milch-cow and  
 strengthen the people

(*Rg. VIII. 35. 16-18*).

Of these Brahman, corresponding to truth, represents the cultural force, Kshatra, corresponding to Rita, represents the political power, and the milch cow (pashu or pecus, wealth) represents the economic force of society. Three types of men emerge—the Brahmana, the philosophic man; the Kshatriya, the ruler man, and the Vaishya, the common man. While the last will produce the wealth of the nation, the second will work for order and security and the first will carry on the intellectual and spiritual enterprise. But while the last group is taken for granted, special effort is to be directed in the encouragement of the first two groups of society. So the *Yajur Veda* insists:

Brahma dringha, kshatram dringha :

Strengthen the power of knowledge,  
 strengthen the ruling power ( *Y. VS. VI. 31* ).

Thus Brahman and Kshatra would  
 make up between them the religious and  
 the political life of Vedic times

Of the major deities, Agni particularly represents the Brahmana ideal ( though He has also been spoken of as a King )

Agni is Supreme among those who live the holy life He is the holy Sage (Vipra), the holy Poet (Kavi) (Rg VIII. 44 21)

We have spoken of Varuna, Indra and other Deities representing the spirit of Kshatra Indra is the ideal hero

He bends not to the strong

nor to the firm,

nor to the defying foe, instigated

by the lawless (Dasyu)

For Indra the lofty mountains are as plains,

and in the deeps there is a ford for Him

{ Rg VI 24 8 }

He is the model (pratimāna) for all the world { Rg II 12 29 }

Two types of virtues are inculcated in the Vedas - wisdom and valour, corresponding to Brahman and Kshatra There are prayers on the one hand, for intellectual power ( dhi ) wisdom ( kratu ) efficiency ( daksham ) spiritual vigour ( varchas ) higher talent ( medha ) etc

Bestow on us the the br ghtest efficiency

{ daksham } { Rg VI 44 9 }

Endow me with sp ritual vigour ( varcha )

{ Rg I 23 24 }

Win for us wisdom ( medha ), win the light  
( Rg IX 9. 9 )

O God ! may my intelligence (dhi) be active  
( Rg X. 42. 3 )

Arouse our intelligence (dhi)  
( Rg. III 62. 10, Y VS 36 3. Sam. 1462 ).

O Varuna ! sharpen the intelligence  
(dhi), wisdom (kratu)

and insight (daksham) of him  
who is striving for enlightenment  
(Rg VIII. 42 3).

O Agni ! make us shine brightly like fire  
produced by friction  
(Rg. VIII, 48, 6)

Sharpen us like the barber's razor  
(Rg VIII. 4. 16).

On the other hand, there are prayers for strength (Śavas), valour (Virya), manliness (Nrīma), spiritual power (Ojas), conquering power (Sahas), wrath (Manyu), fearlessness (Abbava), vigour (Bala) and other qualities of heroism :

O Hero ! give manly vigour ( Śavas )  
to our men ( Rg X. 148 ).

So Thou Hero ! urge us to heroic power  
(Virya) (Rg IX 110. 7)

O Conqueror ! give manliness to our  
bodies, and furious valour

self culture for spiritual advancement The following progressive stages in spiritual realization are indicated in the *Yajur Veda*

By self dedication (Vrata), one obtains  
consecration (Diksha).

By consecration one obtains grace  
( Dakshina ) ;

By grace one obtains reverence (Shraddha)  
and by reverence is Truth (Satyam)  
obtained ( Y. VS XIX. 30 ).

Consecration is not merely a formal initiation There is a deep personal contact between the teacher ( Acharya ) and the pupil under instruction ( Shishya ) While giving the initiation, the Acharya, so says the *Atharva Veda*, carries the pupil within him, so to speak, as the mother carries the foetus in her womb and after the three days of the Vrata, the pupil is born a wonder whom the Gods in a body come to see ( *Ath. XI 5. 3* ). This initiation, therefore, is the path of transition from darkness to light, from humanity to divinity, from untruth to truth. The prayer of the intending initiate is significant -

Agni, Lord of Vrata ' I will  
observe the Vrata  
here I approach truth and untruth

( Y. VS. I. 5 )

What is the good of the instruction that the Acharya gives to the disciple? Instruction is like the

guidance that a man who knows the land gives to one who is a stranger to it

One ignorant of the land asks of one  
who knows it,  
he travels forward, instructed by  
the knowing one

This, indeed, is the blessing of  
instruction ( *Anusasana* ),  
one finds the path that leads directly  
forward ( *Rg. X. 62. 7* ).

Every one by himself could conceivably grope his way to some amount of knowledge, but under instruction one receives guidance and goes directly forward. This not only establishes the necessity of instruction but also states its nature: that it is like the guidance to a traveller who is actuated by a desire to visit and see the land. The initiative, therefore, lies with the pupil. He is not a passive recipient, but an active agent in the acquisition of knowledge.

#### 4 *Austerity (Tapas)*

The path to higher life is the path of constant and hard striving. One wins intellectual and spiritual enlightenment through the sweat of one's brow. What applies to the performance of the ritual also applies generally to spiritual life.

*Na ite stantasya sakhaya devāḥ* . Gods befriend none except those who have been tired ( *Rg. IV 23. 11* ).

The sleepless Ones (Atandrah) punish indolence (Rg VIII 2 18). Never may sleep or idle talk sway us, goes the prayer (Rg VIII 48 14) Tapas is the unflagging, unceasing effort in the achievement of higher things. the infinite pains one has to take to do something really worth while Tapas lies at the beginning of all great things Truth and order, it is said, were born at the beginning out of perfect spiritual effort (Tapas) Gods and sages perform noble things through Tapas

The Tapas par excellence at the beginning of life is the discipline for the student of Vedic learning (Brahman), known as Brahmacharya — the way of obtaining Vedic knowledge primarily, and the way of education and culture in a general sense The *Atharva Veda* describes the character of the Brahmachari in detail (*Ath* VI 5) 'He satisfies the Acharya by *tapas*' 'The Brahmachari with his sacred wood (Samidh), sacred belt (Mekhalā) and his labour, satisfies the world' 'He stands high, clad in spiritual light with his Tapas The young boy takes up the intellectual and spiritual career and after some twenty four years, the mature youth comes back to society in his new garb and his new power 'The Brahmachari comes perfected by the Samidh (spiritual practices by burning with the sacred wood), clad in the black antelope's skin, consecrated (Dikshita), wearing long beard he quickly comes (like the sun) from the eastern to the northern sea, and assembling the

people he forthwith establishes himself.' The creative energy conserved by him during the long period of continence is used on the spiritual plane animated by his creative vigour ' the four quarters live '.

So all who would live worthily must be Brahmacharis. 'The king protects the state (Rashtra) through the Tapas of Brahmacharya. The Acharya desires to have his pupil through Brahmacharya.' 'The maiden obtains a youthful husband through Brahmacharya.' And Brahmacharya lies at the centre of divinity 'The Shining Ones turned away death by the Tapas of Brahmacharya. Indra verily, brought light to the Gods through Brahmacharya.' The Brahmachari, having bathed (Snatah)<sup>1</sup> bright and resplendent shines greatly on the earth '.

Brahmacharya, as suggested above is the discipline of body and mind, for attaining the fitness for Vedic knowledge. Much stress was laid on the control and sublimation of the sex energy. Physical cleanliness was meticulously attended to. The life in the open out of the common human habitations, in sunlight and fresh air, and bathing in rivers and lakes, plain food, hard work, both physical and intellectual, the performance of the fire ritual, hard bed, early rising, and constant personal supervision of the Acharya contributed to Spartan virtues. But the Brahmachari did not grow

<sup>1</sup> 'A' 'Snatak' of ancient India corresponds to the modern

like a hermit secluded from society ; he took his almost daily round of the neighbouring village begging his up keep, and usually meeting the mistress of the household with, ' Madam, give me alms ' A filial attitude was cultivated towards women Again, the Brahmachari was the worshipper of Saraswati, the Divine Mother, at whose breast he prayed to be privileged to feed. As a rule the Acharya was a married man and lived with his family and the Brahmachari was adopted into it

In the Vedas the ideal of Brahmacharya stood for a preparation for life and not the entire life of man Just as in the social life the ideal of Brahman was coordinated with that of Kshatra, so in the personal life of individuals the ideal of Brahmacharya was coordinated with that of family life ( Garhapatya ) . As the maiden, as said above, qualified herself through Brahmacharya for a young husband, so did the young man qualify himself for married life and the leadership of a family It is said of Agastya that ' the powerful sage ( R shir ugrah ) practised both classes of obligations ( Ubhau varnan pposha ), ' viz practice of Brahmacharya as well as Garhapatya, and received true benedictions from the gods ( Rg I 179.6 ) . The Acharya described in the *Atharva Veda* as practising Brahmacharya must have been a sage like Agastya practising Garhapatya too in the orderly life regulated according to *Rita* As Lopamudra, wife of Agastya, says :



The ancient sages who preached the Eternal law (ritas apa) and conversed of eternal statutes (ritānai) with the gods, begot progeny, and did not thereby arrive at the end (of their life of Tapas) ( Rg 1. 179 2 ).

Just as there were two interests in social life, so there were two ways, one succeeding the other in individual life. Here is the broad foundation of the original conception of Varnashrama Dharma. ( In the passage quoted above the term Verna implies Ashrama ) Later on, a return to the forest (Vanaprastha) to resume Brahmacharya was set as the ideal of later life (after fifty) . and later still, there was the ideal of complete renunciation (Sanyasa) for the fourth stage of life though from the earliest times there were men and women who, in their individual way remained celibates. The practice of the last two ideals, however, must have been on a much more limited scale than Brahmacharya. It was Buddhism that preached the extremist ideal of exclusive Brahmacharya, in preference to Garhapatya and Kshatra.

Lord Buddha, however, rightly insisted that suffering by itself was of no avail. The Veda, it should be noted, placed Tapas after Diksha . after initiation into the higher life all effort becomes constructive effort ; there is no mere self-mortification there

#### 5 Brahman

In its primary sense Brahman means prayer. Then it means the body of verses in the Vedas meant

for prayer. Then the term implies the Vedas as books of prayer and wisdom. There is a Deity, Brahmanaspati, the Lord of Prayer. Brahmacharya means the discipline for the mastery of the Vedas and Vedic knowledge. Then Brahman has stood for the Object of Prayer, the Divinity especially contemplated as an impersonal Reality.

We have referred above to the term Brahman standing for the activities connected with the search for Reality and Truth the religious-philosophical spirit from which we get the word Brahmana, one engaged in the search of Brahman (jnana yoga, as we may call it). But the word *Brahman* has also a more specific sense according to the second meaning given above. It means one who knows Brahman or the text of the Veda. It was a marvellous feat in the whole cultural history of the world for the Indians to have preserved the Vedas by oral tradition, taking every care to maintain each syllable of the text unimpaired. It goes to the eternal credit of the Indians that they understood the high value of the documents and did everything humanly possible to preserve them in the face of terrible upheavals internal and external, that changed the whole structure of society. The men who carried the Vedas in their heads deserved well of society, and a traditional social law gave them a privileged position in that they were immune from capital punishment. For to kill a Brahmana would be perhaps, to obstruct the oral tradition of a

Veda carried on by him The *Shatapatha Brahmana*, while describing the benefits of Vedic studies, speaks of the 'protection against capital punishment (Avadhyata),' as one of them ( *S B. II 5. 7* )

Hindu theologians have spoken of the efficacy of the sound of the Vedic hymns ( *Mantras* ) Whatever their theological significance, that they are among the most wonderful of rhythmic creations in the whole poetical history of the world cannot be denied Even in English literature which is so rich in poetry, only the finest passages in Shakespeare and Milton can compare in respect of the power and sweep of rhythm, and sublimity and solemnity of effect, with the best of the Vedic hymns

In their purity, austerity and power, the Vedic hymns have appeared to me like the fresh, clear streams gushing out of the rocky mountain But this analogy of mine was anticipated by the Vedic sage himself

गिरिभ्रजो नोर्मयो मदन्तो

बृहस्पतिम् अभ्यर्का अनावन् ।

Like joyous streams bursting from  
the mountain.

Our hymns have sounded to Brihaspati

( *Rg X. 68 1* )

That the Vedas could be handed down through oral tradition through the ages is due to some extent to the wonderful memorableness of the verses If, as some

think, memorableness is an essential quality of poetry, then from this criterion alone the Vedic hymns would occupy a very high place in the estimation of the world

## 6. Yajna

Yajna is the Vedic ritual or offering libation or oblation on the sacrificial fire lighted on an altar. Another ritual was the offering of Soma juice. Whatever the names of the deities worshipped, the ritual was the same. The Vedic ritual was picturesque accompanied by chanting, singing (Sama hymns were musically rendered) and also acting. There was the simple domestic sacrifice (Agnihotra), there were also great seasonal sacrifices held in open spaces and attended by vast numbers of people. Political colouring was given to the ritual by the institutions of Ashwamedha (which used to be preceded by a challenge to the neighbouring states to a tournament at arms) and Rājastūya (which was utilized by emperors to obtain homage from their vassals).

Being a great public institution the Yajna developed complicated rituals that added to the attractiveness of the ceremonial side of prayer. In course of time, therefore, it needed a class of experts from among Brahmanas, the knowers of the Vedas, to carry on the ritual with the appropriate ceremony. This formal part of the worship began to be known as Karmakanda, the 'action part' of the religion. When in later times the Vedic language became obsolete and the meaning could not be

understood by the worshipper, the formal character of the Yajna became very much pronounced. And curiously enough the whole of the Vedic texts (Sombhāṣ) came to be regarded as part of the Karmakanda having no relation to the spiritual or metaphysical questions! In the circumstances the mastery of the four Vedas and the accessory literature was considered to be a sort of practical and material (Aparā) knowledge, as distinguished from the metaphysical approach to the ultimate reality (Para) through thought and experience ( *Mundaka Upanishad*, I 5)

It is natural that in a society with freedom of thought and expression there should be opposition to mere formalism. So the *Mundaka Upanishad*, standing for spiritualism, to the total exclusion of formalism, says

They are frail rafts in the form of Yajnas in them, with the eighteen members the work is of an inferior type ( *Mun* I 2 7)

Again, the attitude of the Bhakti (Devotion) cult (in which Divine grace is the only source of spiritual advancement) is well indicated in the Bhagavad Gita. The direct experience of the Divine cannot be had 'by (memorizing) Vedas, by Yajnas, by (religious) studies by charity,—not by actions, nor by severe austerities (Tapas)'. But this is not a later idea. We find similar expressions in the Vedic texts. For example

No one by work (Karma) attains Him  
 who works and strengthens evermore,  
 No, not by Yajnas (na yajnaḥ) ( can  
     one attain ) Indra,  
 praised of all, resistless, valiant,  
     bold in might (Rg VIII 70. 3).

The conception of Yajna was much widened by the adoption of five systems of ' great Yajnas,' in which, in addition to the usual Agnihotra, the study and teaching of Vedas (Brahmayajna), service of the guest (driyajna) giving food to lower creatures (Bhutayajna), and service of or offering of oblation to fathers ( Pitriyajna ), were recognized as great Yajnas (Mahayajna). The Bhagavad Gita, in its own remarkable way, distinguishes the spirit of Yajna from its forms. If the spirit is accepted then the material part of Yajna related to the fire, fuel, and the oblation, may be taken not only literally but also symbolically and figuratively. If so then the Yajna of the Karmakanda would be material Yajna, but there will also be the Yajna of Tapas ( spiritual discipline ) in which the fire of restraint is lighted and the senses (or sensual pleasures) are the offering, there will be the Yajna of Yoga in which the vital functions will be the offering into fire of self control, and there will be the Yajna of sacred studies ( Brahmayajna ) and of *gnana* ( in which Brahman—the Supreme Reality—is fire, fuel and oblation as well as sacrificer ) for men of spiritual discipline and self dedication. If this wider meaning of

Yajna, is taken then it must be admitted, in the same wider sense, that (as the followers of the Karma-kanda claim) 'the eaters of the ambrosia of the remains of Yajna go to the changeless Eternal' There should then not only be no opposition to Yajna but Yajna must be accepted as the central thing in the discipline for higher life.

Even this world is not for the man without Yajna, what to speak of any other (Gitā, Ch. IV, 31)

Even in the Veda we find Yajna taken in the figurative sense. The *Yajur Veda* says that 'life prospers through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice)'

Even the ritual of Yajna—the Karma-kanda—prosperes through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice)

यज्ञो यज्ञेन कल्पताम्; May Yajna (ritual) prosper through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice) ( *Yajur. Vd IX 21* )

### *Vedic Realism*

The spiritualization of the concept of Yajna is quite in keeping with the Indian system of thought. The institution of Yajna as ritual however, had specialities of its own. It emphasized, for one thing, the realistic elements of the Vedic religion. Just as, in contrast with the way of the ascetic (Muni) which is austere and silent there is the way of the sage (Rishi) who expresses himself through poetry, music and oratory, so in contrast with the non-ritualistic spiritual strivings of the Yogi who seeks the Eternal through supersensual paths, there

is the way of Karma kanda (ritual), where colour and sound and fragrance and all the other finer things of the senses have their full play. The glorious lustre of the blazing fire, the sweet perfume of the burnt ghee, the blades of grass, the cooked offering, the crushed soma and all the other material of Yajna had their direct and purifying effect on the minds of the worshippers.

And the acting of the priests, the chanting and the music, and the mass action in making the final offering — these carried an immediacy of appeal which was of no small spiritual value.

The Vedic age delighted in forms and ceremonies. It may be asked: Is form altogether unnecessary? Has it no relation to the spirit? Are clothes a mere wrappage? Is food of no concern whatever to the soul of man? Is decoration mere luxury?

The Vedas do not think so. The *Rig Veda* gives the answer in a paradox.

Food is Soul, the apparel is the body, and the ornament is the giver of  
spiritual vigour

आत्मा पितृ तनुर् वास  
ओजोदा अभ्यञ्जनम् ।

॥ ८।१३।४

One who accepted this would say with Walt Whitman,

‘What is the soul if the body  
is not the soul?’



Ascetics have gone the way of starving the body to feed the soul. But the realist : who feels the joy of life, would feed the body to make the soul strong. ' The apparel oft proclaims the man, ' says the philosopher of the court in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But does not the apparel not only give a shape and form and colour to the body, but also do more, namely, symbolize the whole personality ? <sup>1</sup> And the use of the ointment ( a luxury of ancient India ) is declared to be a source of spiritual vigour ( *Qiyas* ) for which the ascetic would consider no privation too hard !

If this is so, is spirituality only seeing with the soul ? The Veda has said that ' the wise see with the spirit and the mind '.

हृदा पश्यन्ति मनसा विपश्चितः । ऋ. १०।१७७।१

But is it not glorious to see with the bodily eyes too, and feel with the body, things that uplift and ennoble ? A sage in the *Rig Veda* prays,

' Give sight to our eyes,  
Give sight to our bodies that they may see  
May we survey and discern this world  
May we look on Thee, Surya,  
the most lovely to behold.  
see well with the eyes of men '

' ' ( *Rg* X. 158. 4-5 )

1. Cf Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, for both the sides of the question.

That Eye as it rises before us God ordained,  
 runs another verse, ' we will see for a hundred years  
 and we will live for a hundred years ' ( *Rg VII 66 1* )  
 The *Yajur Veda* adds to this verse

' And we will hear for a hundred years  
 and speak for a hundred years  
 and we will hold our heads high for  
 a hundred years, yea,  
 even more than a hundred years '

( *Y VS 36 24* )

The realist ideal of life is that of  
 a perfect body and a perfect mind

( *Atharva Veda* )

This leads to the striving after  
 perpetual youth,

' We will be ever youthful ( *Ajara* ) in  
 Thy friendship,' says a  
*Rig Vedic* sage

addressing Indra ( *VII 54.2* ) For  
 Indra is our ' youthful friend '  
 ' ever youthful

' Years do not age Him  
 nor months nor days wear out Indra '

( *VI 24 7* )

Has not the sage known the Atman also ' who is  
 satisfied with *Rasa* ( the joy-giving essence of things )  
 and is not wanting in anything,' as ' serene ageless and

youthful ' ? ( Atmanam dbiram ajaram yuvanam )  
 ( Ath X. 8 44 ).

In the mythologies both Hindu and Greek, we read much about heaven, but in the Vedas there is scanty reference to the world to come ( Cf Rg IX 7 11 ). The Vedas interpret the beauty and glory of the earth and the wonder of life. The great paean to the Earth in the *Atharva Veda* is one of the most magnificent poetic expressions on the subject in world literature.

This world is the most beloved of all. ' ayam lokah pryatamah says the *Atharva Veda* addressing a diseased man, ' Die not before decrepit age ' ( Ath V. 30 17 ). In the following *Rig Vedic* verse, the enveloping air, which we now know to be an essential condition of the existence of life on the earth, is called upon to bring health and happiness :

' May the Air blow His balm  
 carrying joy and health

( Sambhu mayobhu ) to our hearts,  
 May He prolong our lives ( Rg. X 186. 1 )

There is no waiting for a world to come, we must be happy here ( Iha ) and now ( Adya Idānim ).

' Make us today ( adya ) enjoyers of  
 wide room and happiness

( Rg IX. 84 1 )

' May we be masters of felicity  
 now ( Idānim )

( Rg. VII 41. 4 )

The realist's joy of life is evident in the attitude of worship. The mood of worship in the Vedas is not a gloomy one. Worship, like song and poetry, is an overflow of the joy of the soul

' Agni, the joyous, much beloved .  
we worship with joyous hearts '

( *Rg VIII 43 31* )

' Like joyous streams bursting from  
the mountain ' the ' hymns of  
prayer have proceeded to the  
Divinity ( *Rg X 68, 1* )

Another aspect of Vedic Realism is that man is not conceived to be a mean and sinful creature, on the other hand he is conscious of a divinity within himself ' O Bounteous Ones, we have established here our perpetual brotherhood, our kinship, in the mother's womb,' says a sage in the *Rig Veda*, addressing Gods ' *VIII 83 8* ). The *Atharva Veda*, after describing the creation of man, says that ' having fused the mortal man complete, the Gods entered into him ' ( *Ath XI 8 13* ) So, to be human is to be divine too

' Therefore whoever knows man regards  
Him as Brahman's self '

( *Brahmeti manyate* ( *Ath XI. 8. 32* ).

To others, God is in His heaven, to the Vedic Realist, God is in the universe. *Pasya mātā*—' See Me here '—is the revelation He is also in the homes as

well as the hearts of man. The home of man that is ruled by the master and mistress, is really presided over by the Deity—Agni—who is addressed as 'Grihapati,' Master of the household ( Y 1 S. 2 28 ) He has also been spoken of as 'the beloved house friend *Damunasi*), the Guest in the house' ( Rg V 4 9 ). And there can be divine beauty in the dwelling of man if it is properly built. The bountiful man receives the following blessing

'To the bountiful may there be the house,  
( lovely ) like the lake of lotus,  
Ornamented around, beautiful as the  
divine mansion' ( Rg X 107 10 )

Naturally, the home was regarded with tender feelings. 'Sweet be my going forth from home, and sweet be my return to it.

( Rg. X. 24 6 )

### *Vedic Collectivism*

Just as the Yajna illustrated the realist spirit in the Vedas, the exaltation of the earth and man, and the joy of life, so also did it symbolize the collectivistic ideal of the Vedas

First, there is the ideal of conjugal union. Every Yajna required the presence of the master ( Pati ) and mistress ( Patni ) of the household. The marriage hymns in the *Rig Veda*, ( X 85 ) reproduced in the *Atharva Veda* ( Ch X IV ), with interesting supplements have been the means of consecrating marriage

endeared of her husband, and she also prays for wealth and heroic sons ( *Rg* \ 10 12 13 ) The order of domestic life is under Eternal Order ( *Rita* ), and hence the marital relations are consecrated ' May you two ' says the *Atharva Veda*, addressing the married couple, ' in the pursuit of Eternal Law ( *Rita* ), speaking truth ( *Rita* ) enjoy together prosperity and good fortune '

The problem of domestic life is to establish the harmony and concord that exist in Nature through the working of Eternal Order ( *Rita* ) The same is the problem of social life as a whole In the Vedic ideology the prefix *Sam* ( *Com* ) is found to be attached to words indicating the collective actions of people Similarly *Samana* ( common ) implies a collective relation. *Sa-*, and *Sah* also have been used for the idea of union In the *Atharva Veda* \ II 30 ) the sage addresses a family group

' I shall make you of united ( *Sa* ) heart,  
of one ( *Sam* ) mind, free from hate ,  
be attached to one another like the  
newly born calf to the cow

Let the son follow the father in his  
noble endeavour ( *Vrata* )  
and be of one mind with the mother  
let the wife speak sweet peaceful  
words to the husband

Let not brother hate brother,  
 sister hate sister,

Be all united ( Sam ) and of one ( Sa )  
 high purpose ( Vrata ) and speak  
 words with courtesy

May your drink be common ( Samāna )  
 your food be together ( Saha )'

So, first comes the conjugal union, then the unity of the family. The family is desired to assemble round the sacrificial fire like the spokes of a wheel round the nave ( *Aṭh* )

From the family, there is the higher step to the society at large. One must not live for oneself alone. 'The solitary eater is the solitary sinner' ( *Rg*, X. 117. 6 ). The sombre words in the closing hymn of the *Rig Veda* have resounded through the ages

' Assemble ( Sam ), speak in harmony ( Sam )  
 May your minds be of one accord ( Sam- )

Your prayer ( Mantra ) be common ( Samāna ),  
 your assembly be common ( Samāna ),

Common ( Samāna ) your mind, united ( Saha )  
 your thoughts,

I counsel you to common ( Samāna ) purpose,  
 and I worship with your

common ( Samāna ) oblation.' ( *Rg* X, 191. 2-3 ),

The common oblation was a visible demonstration of social unity

In collective life, assemblies play an important part, and the art of speaking is much in demand. Sages pray that they may 'speak loud' in the socio religious assembly—Vidatha (*Rg* II 19). The newly married wife is told that she would address the Vidatha. Then there was the Sabha—the political council which required well qualified people. In the *Yajur Veda* there is a prayer that the Prince should have for his son a 'Sabbeya Yuva, a youth capable of playing his part in the Sabha or political gathering' (*Y VS* XXII 22). The *Rig Veda* speaks of the man who 'has carried the day in the political assembly'. 'All his friends are delighted with the man who has triumphed in the Council and returned in glory' (*Rg* X 71 10). Elsewhere there is a prayer for the ideal son

" To the man who offers to him  
 God Soma gives a hero son (Vir)  
 who is fit for work (Karmanya),  
 fit for the home (Sadanya),  
 fit for the religious assembly (Vidathya),  
 fit for the political council  
 (Sabbeya) and a source of glory to  
 his father' (*Rg* I. 91. 20)



Here is the ideal for the good citizen. A man must live beyond his individual sphere and contribute to collective life. Beyond the limited interests of the family and the social group there was the wider interest of the state ('rashtra'), which was the concern of all the enlightened people. Sages in the *Yajur Veda* declare

'We shall awake in the state, placed in the front line'—*vayam rashtre jagriāma purohitāh* (Y. VS XIX 23 )

### *Vedic Universalism*

All the instruction and exhortation of the Vedas are addressed to humanity at large. It is repeatedly asserted that the Deity is common to all

समानम् इन्द्रम् अवसे हवामहे . we invoke for succour

Indra who is common to all (Rg VIII 99 8)

इन्द्र साधारणस् त्वम् . Indra Thou art common to all

( i. e. the common Lord of all )

Twam vishve mānusha yugendra havante Thee

all races of mankind, Indra !

with uplifted ladles invoke (Rg VIII 46 12)

The sages preached the Vedas to all, at home and abroad. A sage in *Yajur Veda* says

'So may I speak these blessed words  
to the people at large (*janebhyah*)  
to the Brahmana and the Kshatriya,  
to the Shudra and the Vaishya

to my own people (swaya) and to the foreigner  
(ananaya) (Y VS 26 2) \*

Progressing on the way of Brahman—the Vedas  
and spiritual knowledge—one grows more and more  
liberal and the vision is widened. The Vedas proceed  
from fellowship with men to the fellowship with all  
living beings, insisting on the reciprocity of the feeling  
'O the Strong One ! make me strong

May all the living beings look on me with the eye  
of a friend,

May I look on all living beings with the eye of a  
friend.

\* [We find from the *Ramayana* : that the non-Aryan races were  
quite conversant with the Vedas. Rama and Lakshmana, wander-  
ing in search of Sita are met by Hanuman who addresses them in  
Sanskrit. Rama admires the correctness of his language and says

\* Nandrigveda-vinitasya nayajurvédadbarinah,  
nasamaveda vidusbah sakyam evam prabhashitum  
(*Ramayana*, Kish) \*

\* For one not made wise by the study of the *Rig Veda*,  
for one who has not mastered the *Iajur Veda*  
for one not versed in the *Sam Veda* : it is not possible to  
speak like this \*

When Hanuman enters Lanka alone in search of Sita he hears  
at night \* the mantras of the reciters in the homes of Rakshasas\*  
and he \* sees demons (Yatudhanan) engaged in the study of the  
Holy Scriptures (swadhyayanirata) : the Vedas (*Rama Sund* )  
At any rate Valmiki understood the Vedas to be meant for all the  
races of mankind ]

May we (all) look on (one another) with the eye of  
a friend (mitra) (Y, VS 36 18)

In his final realization, the sage, who is described  
as Vena, the Loving One<sup>1</sup> sees all reality united in the  
Supreme Being

' The loving sage beholds that mysterious  
Existence (Sat)

Wherein the universe comes to have one nest '  
( Y VS 32, 8 ),

India has experimented with the six principles of  
religion, considered above, for at least three thousand  
and five hundred years. Qualitatively very great success  
has been achieved throughout the ages, including  
the one in which we are living. Men remarkable for  
their spiritual power, wisdom, and universality of out-  
look have been thrown up from different parts of the  
country. Quantitatively too the results are not negligi-  
ble, the masses of Hindus even today show certain  
essential traits of behaviour which are in conformity  
with some of these principles and which often present a  
contrast to similar classes of people at home and abroad.

The order of the principles has remained qualita-  
tively much as the Veda put them. The one that  
created dissent earliest of all was the last—ritual

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rg. Venanti venah (X 64—2) The lovers (i.e. loving  
worshippers) yearn with love.

( Karma kanda ). The Vedic text, Sabda Brahman ( which is last but one ) is still being learnt orally by scores of people in different parts of India. And it is to the eternal credit of Western savants that they published authoritative texts of the Vedas. Valmiki compares Hanuman's quest of Sita to the search for a lost Veda ( Nashtam Veda srutim iva ), these devoted scholars have performed the task of cultural volunteers in the present times. Consecration and self-dedication ( Diksha and Tapah ), the third and fourth principles, are found to have remarkable parallels in the whole hearted pursuit of knowledge among Western scholars and scientists. The physical and cultural value of the sublimation of the reproductive energy has been newly recognized by modern analytical psychology. Rita ( Order ) in the wide ( Brihat ) Vedic sense is still to be realized by the world, torn asunder by manifold forces of disorder, and the harmony of the introverted Yogic path has to find its parallel in the concrete, external relations of men, communities and nations. Finally, the first principle is ever first; Satya as integrity, for every moment of life, and Satya as Sat or Reality for those exalted moments when man ' feels greater than he knows or those exalted men who live " on the peak of existence ' ( Kutastha ) '. There have been leaders of thought in different ages who have asserted that religion is synonymous with truth—that God is Truth.

Nowadays we come across apologists for the abori-

ginal cultures superseded by the Vedic. It is difficult to decide if much of Dravidian culture is really non Vedic. But the culture of aboriginal tribes like Bhils, Kols, Santals, Kukis, Todas and Oraos are evidently non-Vedic. It is interesting to find how these tribes have lived their simple picturesque lives in the jungles without a change for the last three or four millenniums, while in their immediate neighbourhood the grand drama of the main body of the Indian people was being enacted with its rise and fall, climax and catastrophe, from age to age. Simplicity and picturesqueness are good enough in their own way—and that is why these aboriginal people need not be disturbed and should be given protection against zealous evangelists—but the intellectual adventure, the spiritual quest, the attempt to break the barriers of tribe and group and unite men through ideals of harmony and order, of justice and universal fellowship, these will ever lure the spirit of the awakened man, and endless efforts will be made to achieve progress and upliftment for the race.

It is the essence of the Vedic outlook to be progressive. 'Go forward, fear not, fight,' says the Vedic spirit of Kshatra ( Rg 1. 80. 3 ) प्रैहि अमोहि धृणुहि. 'He goes forward, instructed by one who knows,' says the spirit of Brahman: स प्रैति क्षेत्रविदानुशिष्ट. ( ऋ. १०।३२।७ ) To return, then, to the Vedas is to return to the dynamic view of life characteristic of the Vedic age—the Age of Truth (Satya Yuga)

One who lies down is Kali,  
                     one who awakes is Dvāpara,  
 One who stands up becomes Tretā,  
                     and one who moves on realizes  
 the Satya Yuga    Therefore move on !

( *Aitareya Brahmanā* )-

' Indra ( the Supreme Vedic Deity ),' says the *Aitareya Brahman*, 'is the friend of those who move on'

The Vedas, however, do not contemplate movement without a purpose, a mere form of life without a content. It conceives movement as the progress on the path of Truth and Eternal Order, consecration and self-dedication to a noble ideal, of prayer and wisdom, and of ritual and sacrifice. Man has to grow to the fullest stature of his being so that he may live in a broad, free world in the joy of the spirit. The *Atharva Veda* which contemplates the six principles of Dharma contemplates such a world too.

' Truth, Order that is great and stern,  
                     consecration, austerity  
 prayer and ritual—these uphold the earth  
 May that Earth, Mistress of the past  
                     and the future, make a wide world  
 for us' (*Ath XII 1 1* )

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भक्ति-योग

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

## THE PATH OF DEVOTION

The simplest attitude in religion is that of love and devotion ( भक्तियोग ). Here the Divinity is contemplated as the Lord and in most affectionate terms, as Father, Mother, Brother, Friend, Guest and so on. The worshipper seeks Divine bliss ( स्वनि ). He prays for grace ( ऊति ), benediction ( शम् ), protection ( शर्मन् ), succour ( अवस् ), mercy ( मृळा ), benevolence ( सुमति ), love ( वेन ) etc. God is the Saviour ( नाता ), the Merciful One ( मर्दिता ), Protector ( अविता ), and so on. He is the Beloved One ( जुष्ट, प्रेष्ठ ) and He as well as the worshipper is described as the Loving One ( वेन ). According to this ideology the Divinity is Common ( समान ) and Universal ( साधारण ). The spirit of love arouses the finest of Vedic poetry, and prayer often becomes song.

(1) ✓

The Supreme Being

हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताम्रे

भूतस्य जातः पतिर् एक आसीत् ।

स दाधार पृथिवीं द्याम् उत्तेमा

कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

ऋग्वेद, मण्डल १०।१२।१

यजुर्वेद ( वाजसेनीय संहिता ) १३।३, २३।१, २५।१०

अथर्ववेद, ४।२।७



"What God shall we adore with our oblation ?  
 The Divine Being who existed in the beginning,  
 Who was the One Lord of creation,  
 Who fixed and upholds this earth and sky  
 [ The Deity is Kah, " Who ? ]

God is Creator and Ultimate Being. He is the Lord  
 of all existence—the Supporter of the universe

It is typical of Vedic worship that the worshipper  
 seeks the knowledge of the Object to be worshipped.  
 His devotion is not blind, but based on enlightenment

(2)

The Source of Power ✓

य आत्मदा बलदा यस्य विश्व  
 उपासते प्रशिष्य यस्य देवा ।  
 यस्य ऋषयामृतं यस्य मृत्यु-  
 ब्रह्म देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

ॐ १०।१२१।२ य २३। २, २५।११ अ ४।१।८

"What God shall we adore with our oblation ?  
 Him who is the giver of power and vigour,  
 Whose commandments all cosmic forces obey,  
 Him whose shadow is immortality and who is  
 the Lord of death '

[ The Deity is Kah Who ? ]

God is the Source of all strength, spiritual as well  
 as physical. In Him man has his greatest refuge. Death  
 is from Him, in His shadow is immortality

(3)

### The Rallying Point of All

समेत विश्वा ओजसा पति दिवा

य एक इदं भूर् अतिथिर्जनानाम् ।

स पृथ्वी नूतनम् आजिगापन्त

यत्नान्नु वावृत एक इत् ॥ साम १।४।३।३ (३७२)

'Come together ye all, with power of spirit, to the  
Lord of heaven,

Who is only One, the Guest of the people,  
He the Ancient, desires to come to the new,  
To Him all path ways turn, verily He is One'

[ The Deity is Indra ]

The noble verse is reproduced from the Sama veda  
in the Atharva veda VII 21 1 [ where the Deity is  
Brahman ]

Note the word समेत "come together" "assemble"  
The Vedic worship was of a collective type विश्वा—all—  
implies that all are invited to worship, without excep-  
tion and without distinction ओजस् is spiritual power  
or soul-force, which was specially cultivated by the  
Vedic religion एक—One—implies unity of the Godhead  
अतिथि—Guest—is a graceful expression One who  
is most welcome जन— means the people God is  
the God of all Compare—

इन्द्र साधारणस्त्वम् । ऋ. ८।६५।७

"God! Thou art common to all

Also—

समानम् इन्द्रम् अवसे हवामहे । ऋ. ८।९९।८

'We invoke Indra who is common to all'

पूज्यो—the Ancient the First cause 'To Him all  
path ways turn —: e He is the Supreme Goal of all

(4)

### Song of Praise

अर्चत प्रार्चत प्रियमेधासो अर्चत ।

अर्चेन्तु पुत्रका उत पुर न धृष्णवर्चत ॥

अव स्वराति गर्गरो गोधा परि सनिध्यणत् ।

पिङ्गा परि चनिष्कदद् इन्द्राय ब्रह्मोद्यतम् ॥

ऋ. ८।६९।८-९

"Sing, sing ye forth your songs of praise,

sing, O Priyamedhas!

Let children also sing!

Sing the praise of Him who is a Refuge like  
the castle

Now loudly let the violin sound,

the lute send its voice with might,

Let the string send its tunes about,

to God is our hymn upraised "

[ Here the Deity is Indra ]

Down through the ages the sky of India has rung  
with songs of love and devotion

This is the typical mode of worship according to the path of devotion (भक्ति). Here prayer is the musical out burst from the love filled heart of man. This simple and direct prayer comes from the child as well as the adult

(5)

### The Greatest Friend

प्राता नो बोधि ददृशान आपिर्

अभिख्याता मदिता सोम्यानाम् ।

सखा पिता पितृतम पितृणा

कतम् लोकम् उशते वयोधाः ॥ ऋ. ४।१७।१७

"Be Thou our Saviour, show Thyself our Own, looking after and showing mercy to the worshippers. Friend, Father, Fatherliest of fathers, Giving to the loving worshipper freedom and vital power '

The terms प्राता, Saviour, मदिता, the Merciful One, and सखा, Friend, typically signify the spirit of the religion of devotion (भक्ति योग). Similarly उशते, 'to the loving or longing one', shows love as the mode of approach to the Divine 'Fatherliest of fathers' indicates the supreme nature of the Divinity. The gifts asked for are also typical of the Vedas—लोकम्—'a wide world', in which we can move freely, and वयः, 'life, vital force'.

[ God is spoken of as Indra. ]

## The One with many Names

यो नः पिता जनिता यो विधाता

धामानि वेद भुवनानि विश्वा ।

यो देवाना नामधा एक एव

त सप्रश्न भुवना यन्त्यन्या ॥ क. १०।८२।३

य. १७।१७; अ. २।१।३

'Father who made us, our Disposer,  
He knows all positions, all things existing;  
He is the only One, giving names to different Gods,  
Him other beings seek with queries.'

God is One, Gods are differently named Ideas of  
the One Being.

[The Deity is Vishwakarma (विश्वकर्मान्), the  
Creator (lit. Architect) of the Universe.]

The same verse occurs in *Atharva Veda* ( 11.1.3 )

स नः पिता जनिता स उत बन्धुः

"He is our Father, our Progenitor, Our Friend."

In *Yajur Veda* a somewhat different version of  
the same stanza occurs :

स नो बन्धुर् जनिता स विधाता

धामानि वेद भुवनानि विश्वा । य. (वा.स.) ३२।१०

"He is our Friend, Our Father, Our creator;  
He is Master of all existing things and all Laws".

Also compare *Sama Veda* (1841):

उत वात पितामि न उत भ्रातोत न सखा

' O God ! Thou art our Father, our Brother,  
our Friend "

( Also *Rigveda* X 186 2 )

(6)

### Divine Benevolence

अभ्यूषोति यन्नम्रं निपातु विश्वं यत्तुलम् ।

प्रेमन्ध रयतिः श्रोणा भूत् ॥ ऋ. ८।७१।२

"He clothes all that is naked,

He doctors all that is sick

The blind man sees, the cripple walks "

[ The Deity is Agni ]

Here Divine benevolence is described Man is  
most God like when he takes care of the naked, the  
sick, the blind and the cripple

(7)

### God is Pure

एतो न्विन्द्र स्तवाम शुद्ध शुद्धन साम्ना ।

शुद्धैर् उक्थैर् वाहृध्वास शुद्ध आशीर्वान् गमन्तु ॥

ऋ. ८।१५।७

"Come now and let us glorify the Deity, who is  
pure, with pure Sama hymn

"Let us delight Him with pure laudation, may the  
Pure, Blissful One, be pleased "

Purity is Godliness. Man should be pure in body and mind in offering his prayers to God.

Compare the following verse which describes divine holiness

अग्नि. शुचिमततमः शुचिर्विप्र शुचिः कविः ।

शुची रोचत आहुत ॥ ऋ. ८।४४।२१

"The Deity is Supreme among those who live the holy life. He is the Holy Sage, the holy Poet. He, who is being called by us in prayer, is resplendent in holiness."

The Vedas, in addition to recognising truth, goodness and beauty as the values of life, also recognise the spiritual value—holiness.

(8)

### The Divinity in Man

प्र भ्रातृत्व मुदानयोऽथ द्विता समान्या ।

मातृगर्भे भ्रामहे ॥ ऋ. ८।८३।८

"O Bounteous One, we have established here our perpetual brotherhood,

Our kinship, in the mother's womb."

To be born man is to partake of the divine nature. Man establishes his kinship with the Divine in the mother's womb.

[ The verse is addressed to "All Gods " ( विश्वे देवताः ) ]

This sense of the essential divinity of man is a special feature of the Vedic religion and Aryan spiritual idealism. The idea also occurs in the Atharva Veda Book XI, where in the description of the creation of the Body of Man in the beginning, it is said

सर्वे संसिच्य मर्त्यं देवाः पुरुषमाविशन् (अ. ११।८।१३)

"When they had fused the mortal man  
complete, the Gods entered into him "

तस्माद् वै विद्वान् पुरुषमिदं ब्रह्मेति मन्यते ।

सर्वो ह्यस्मिन् देवता गानो गोष्ठ इवासते ॥ (अ. ११।८।१२ )

"Therefore whoever knoweth man regardeth him  
as Brahman's self

For all the Deities ' (or divine qualities) "abide  
in him as cattle in their pen "

In Rigveda men have been addressed as " sons of  
immortality '

शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्रा

आ ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः । ऋ. १०।१३।१

" My all sons of immortality listen,—all the  
possessors of celestial natures "

It is from this point of view that religion has been described as " the manifestation of the divinity that is already in man" ( Swami Vivekananda ) Man approaches God through what is divine in himself.



## Approaching the Divine through the Joy of Soul

अग्नि मन्द्र पुरुप्रिय

शीर पावकशोचियम् ।

इन्द्रि मन्त्रेभि रीमेहे ॥ ऋ ८४३-३१

"We worship with joyous hearts the joyous Deity, dear to all effulgent, holy, purifying" (Rig viii 43 31)

There is a sacredness in our highest joy, corresponding to the infinite joy in the Divine Hence a medium of approach to the Divine is the joy of the soul

The conception of the joy of a stainless soul seeking the stainless joy of the Divine is typically Aryan According to it man is not borne down under the burden of sin His is not a worship in penitence It is the opening of the flood gates of a joyous soul before the radiant glory of the Source of all joy

Vedic poetry is typical of this joyous out pouring of a lofty spirit. The Vedic hymns have been rightly compared in the Veda itself to streams gushing out of mountains

गिरिभ्रजो नोर्मयो मदन्तो ।

बृहस्पतिमभ्य १ को अनावन् ॥ ऋ १०।६८।१

"Like merry streamlets bursting from the mountain to Brihaspati our hymns have sounded"

( 10 )

## God the Saviour

त्रातारमिन्द्रम् अवितारमिन्द्र हवे हवे सुहृदं शूरमिन्द्रम् ।  
 ह्वयामि शक्रं पुष्टहृतामिन्द्रं स्वस्ति नो भगवा घातिन्द्र ॥

ऋ ६।४७।११, साम ३३३

अ ७।८६।१, शु य २०।५०

"God the Rescuer, God the Saviour, Mighty God  
 happily invoked at each invocation,  
 God, Powerful, invoked of many, I invoke,  
 May God, the Bounteous, confer on us blessing'  
 ( Here God is spoken of as Indra )

The hymn occurs in all the four Vedas, being put into the musical form in the *Sama Veda*. The recurring rhythm of "Indram" and the smoothly flowing sounds make it most suitable for communal singing (*kirtana*).

The idea is typical of the attitude of devotion (*bhakti*, as it came to be called later) in which man seeks Divine assistance and grace to help him out of his sorrows and imperfections. According to the *bhakti* ideal, the sincere devotion of the heart is enough for worship, the details of ritual are not needed. The same conception is found here.

This is a feature of mass religion. This hymn, in respect of its idea as well as of metrical form, is a typical mass prayer.

It may be noted that according to the *Vedas*, God Himself is the Saviour and Helper. In later times, in India and elsewhere, there have been religious sects thinking of a God-sent man (prophet) or God man (*avatar* or Messiah) as the Helper and Saviour. Still later, the instructor (*guru*) assumed almost the dignity of a Saviour. But the Vedic ideal of God as the Helper and Saviour carries a deeper and more universal appeal than these.

[We find echoes of this hymn in the devotional songs of later times, as in

भज गोविन्द भज गोविन्द भज गोविन्दम्,

'Govinda' evidently is a Vaishnavite substitute for the Vedic 'Indra']

### (11)

#### God, the Refuge of Man.

प्र ते यन्ति प्र त द्यमि मम

भुवो यथा घन्तो नो हवेषु ।

घन्वन्निव प्रपा असि त्वमान

इयक्ष्वे पुर्ये प्रतन राजन् ॥ ऋ १०।४१

"To Thee I will bring oblation, to Thee I will send my prayer—to Thee who hast been adorable in our invocations,

A fountain in the desert art Thou, O Deity! to the worshipful man, O Ancient King!"

R V. X 41

Here, again, we find an attitude of worship in keeping with what has come to be known latterly as the spirit of *bhakti*. As in the desert the thirsty man is saved by a fountain of water found in an oasis, so in the world man is saved by Divine grace

(12)

### The Divine Mother.

The same idea of the Divinity as the Refuge of man is expressed in the following hymn in which the Deity is addressed in the feminine gender, as Mother

इमा जुह्वाना युष्मदा नमोमि  
 ग्रानि स्तोम सरस्वति जुषस्य ।  
 तव शर्मन् प्रियतमे दधाना  
 उव स्येषाम शरण न वृक्षम् ॥

ऋ ७।१५।५

“ ‘These offerings have ye made with adoration’,  
 say this Saraswati and be pleased with our prayer,

And placing us under Thy most beloved protection  
 may we approach Thee as a tree for shelter ”

As birds seek the shelter of the tree so we, men,  
 seek the shelter of the Divine Mother, Saraswati

The worship of the Divinity as Mother is a special  
 feature of the religion of love. The word “*priyatama*”,

'most beloved, which carries so much sweetness in the text quoted above, is still used in the Indian languages and has the same sweet association about it

The word *शर्मन्* 'Divine protection, grace', occurs frequently in the *Vedas*. The *Sama Veda* has a beautiful line about it

शर्म रमे भमान्तरम् ( सा १८७२ )

"Divine grace is the coat of mail within me

(The warrior is clad in the coat of mail which protects the vital parts of his body, but the grace of God is the coat of mail within him)

(13)

### Prayer to God in Pain

Through the joy of his soul man approaches God, the joyful. In moments of pain and distress he approaches God the merciful. The following prayer is of this type

मूषे न शिश्ना व्यदन्ति माप्य स्तोनाय ते शतक्रनो ।  
सकृन् मु नो मयवभिन्द्र मृच्छाऽपि पितेव नो भव ॥

ऋ १०।१२।३

'As rats eat weavers' threads, cares are consuming me, thy singer, O God Almighty !

Have mercy on us now, O Gracious Lord! Be Thou a Father unto us".

This prayer for मृष्ट्या, Divine mercy or grace, like that for Divine protection (शर्मन्) is typical of the attitude of *bhakti*, and is a feature of mass religion.

(14) .

### God the Support of the Humble

वि चक्रमे पृथिवीम् एष एता  
क्षेत्राय विष्णुर् मनुष्ये दशस्यन् ।  
ध्रुवाद्यो अस्य कीरयो जनास  
उदशितिं मुजनिमा चकार ॥ ऋ ७।१००।४

"Vishnu overstrode this earth, ready to give it for a home to man

In Him the humble people find their safety

This noble One has made the earth spacious for them "

The worship of Vishnu took a sectarian form in the Vaishnavite cult. But the ideology of Vaishnavism is found in the Vedas. According to this, the chief thing in religion is Divine grace which is most needed by the humble and distressed. The devotee constantly realises that all he has and all he enjoys are from God who in this infinite kindness has endowed him with these

This is also the ideology of mass-religion.

(18)

**The Divinity as Mother to Infants**

यस्ते स्तनः शशयो यो मयोभूर

येन विश्वा पुण्याणि वार्याणि ।

यो रत्नधा वसुविद् यः सुदत्तः

सस्त्विति तन् इह धातये कः ॥ ऋ. १।१६।४९,

अ. ७।१०।१, शु. य. ३।८।५

"Saraswati! that exhaustless breast of Thine  
which is the source of well being,

With which Thou nourishest all good things,

Which is the container of treasure, the possessor  
of wealth, giver of goodness,

That Thou lay bare here for our nourishment "

Here the worshipper is like the child feeding at the  
breast of the Divine Mother.

The following is a similar prayer to "Ushas"

तस्यास्ते रत्नभाज ईमहे वय

स्याम मातुर् न मूनवः । ऋ ७।८।१।४

"We yearn to be Thine own, Dealer of jewels.  
May we be like sons of Thee, the Mother "

(19)

**The Divinity as Child.**

The idea of God being the most beloved has been  
expressed in various ways. He has been compared to  
the child loved by and loving the mother, as in the  
following stanza.

एकः सुपर्णः स समुद्रम् आ विवेश

स इदं विश्वं भुवनं वि चष्टे ।

त पाकेन मनसापश्यन् अन्तितम्

त माता रेव्हि स उ रेव्हि मातरम् ॥ ऋ. १०।११।४

"The One Beautiful winged [i. e. the Divine]—  
He has entered the sea ( vastness of space ),

He looks round this whole universe,

Him with a simple heart I have seen from near,

Him His Mother kisses and He kisses His Mother."

"सुपर्ण", the "Beautiful winged" (Bird), is a symbol  
for the Deity in the mystical conception of the Divinity.  
Note the following line in the same hymn

सुपर्णे विष्णोः कवयो वचोभिर्

एक सन्त नहुषा कल्पयन्ति । ऋ. १०।११।५

"The Beautiful winged (Bird)" [i. e. the Deity] who  
is One the wise poets imagine with their words in many  
ways."

The poet says he observes the Divine Being from  
near and sees the vision of the child kissed by and kissing  
the mother.

Here, whatever the rational significance of the line,  
the spiritual and poetic significance is simple and clear  
that the vision of the Divinity is the vision of sweet  
love between child and mother.



(20)

### Hymns caress the Child

The idea is also found in R. V. X. 123. 1—where the Deity is spoken of as "Vena", "the loving (and beloved) One"

अय वेनश्चोदयत् पृथिविभां

ज्योतिर्जरायू रजसो विमाने ।

इमम् अपा सगमे सूर्यस्य

शिशु न विप्रा मतिभो रिदन्ति ॥ ऋ. १०।१२३।१,

शु. य. ७।१६

"This is the Loving One, driving the issues of the many-coloured,

The Spring of light, in the chariot of splendour,

Him at the meeting of the waters and the sun

The sages with their hymns caress as a child."

Here also out of the obscurity of mystic symbolism there emerges a clear poetic idea that the songs of the sages caress the Divinity as a child.

(21)

### Hymns Kiss the Child

There is an equally mystical stanza—R.V. IX. 85. 11—in which the loving sages, called "Venas" (loving ones) seek the mysterious Being

नाके सुपर्णम् उपपत्तिवासं  
 गिरो वेनानाम् अकुपन्त पूर्वाः ।  
 शिशुं रिहन्ति मतयः पनिम्रत  
 हिरण्यं शकुन क्षामणि स्थाम् ॥ ऋ. १।८५।११

"The many voices of the loving ones sought the Bird who had flown to the heavens."

The hymns kiss the Child worthy of laudation,—the golden-hued Bird that sits on the earth."

In spite of the mystical symbolism the idea of worship through tender love corresponding to the tender caressing of a child is clear enough here.

[ In later forms of Indian religion the conception of the Divinity as a child reappears in the "religion of affection" — "vatsala rasa"—which formed part of the Bhakti cult. In the Purana, Child Krishna is made to symbolise the idea of the Divinity beloved as the child ].

(22)

### Love Yearning for the Divine

The eagerness and yearning of love are expressed in the following hymn :

ऋत्यान्ते ऋतवो हृत्सु धीतयो  
 वेनन्ति वेनाः पतयन्त्या दिशः ।  
 न मूर्द्धिता विद्यते अन्य एभ्यो  
 देवेषु मे अधिकामा अयसत ॥ ऋ. १०।६४।२

"In my heart thoughts and feelings agitate :  
 Love-yearnings proceed ; they fly to all the regions.  
 No comforter exists other than These ;  
 In the Gods are my highest longings fixed."

[From the spiritual point of view there is no difference in the Vedas between singular dual or plural of numbers, nor between the masculine feminine and neuter genders, in which the names of the Divinity may appear.]

(23)

### Unity of the World in the Divine

One who realises the Divine as the Loving One finds the whole world united in Him. In the following verse of the *Yajur Veda* the sage, significantly named "Vena," (the loving one), sees such a vision :

वेनम् तत् पश्यन् निहितं गुह्यं सद्

यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकनीडम् ।

तस्मिन्निदं च सच वि चेति सर्वं च

स ज्योतः प्रोतश्च विभूः प्रजासु ॥ यजु. ३२।८

"The sage beholdeth that Mysterious Existence wherein all comes to have one home :

Therein unites and therefrom issues the whole :

That All - pervading One is warp and woof in created beings."

[Here we find all the typical ideas of mysticism,

First, the Divinity is a subject of personal experience [ Vena sees That ] Secondly, the ultimate conception of Divinity is that of a mystery (symbolically expressed as गुहानिहितः ]. Thirdly, the abstract conception of the Divine as an Essence, an Existence, is symbolised by the pronoun in neuter singular तत् qualifying the neuter abstract noun, सद्. The idea becomes concrete with the masculine विभूः in the next line. Fourthly, in the Divine the whole universe is united in love, as birds in a nest ( नीड, primary sense) or men in a home ( नीड, secondary sense ).

The idea of the Divine presence as the underlying power of unity is beautifully expressed by the metaphor of warp and woof.

(24)

### God the Lover

‘ दोहेन गाम् उप शिक्षा सखाय  
प्र बोधय जरित् जारम् इन्द्रम् ।  
कोश न पूर्णं वसुना न्युष्टम्  
आ व्यावय मन्देवाय शूरम् ॥ ऋ १०।४२।२

“ Draw thy Friend to thee like a cow to milking  
O Singer, wake up God the Lover !  
Move the Hero for the gift of bounty  
Like the vessel filled brimful with treasure.”

Here the word Lover ( जार ) has been used in a general sense. It has also been used in a particular sense to indicate the youthful gallant who loves a maiden :

जारः कनीन इव चक्षुदानः । ऋ. १।११७।१८

" Bounteous as the lover of the maiden."

[ The word जार has got a degraded meaning in certain modern Indian languages. In the Vedas it means just 'a lover' ].

Not only the simile but also the metaphorical expression is found :

यमो ह जातो यमो जनिर

जारः कभीनो पतिर्जनीनाम् । ऋ. १।६६।४

" He is the Master of present and of future life : the Lover of maidens, the Husband of wives."

(25)

### Like the Youth among Maidens

In the following verse the Divinity described as Soma is said to meet waters, ( आपः ) as a young man meets youthful maidens :

वागिः सोमो मोदते हरते च

कल्याणीभिर् युवतिभिर् न मयः ।

वा अप्स्यो अतो अञ्जा परेहि

यद् आसिद्धा ओषधीभिः पुनीतात् ॥ ऋ १०।३०।५

The waters in whom the Deity delights and rejoices,  
 as a young man with graceful maidens,  
 Go to them, O worshipper,  
 And purify with herbs what thou hast sprinkled \*

The adjective कल्याणी, good, blissful, gracious,  
 applied to maidens, indicates the graceful nature of the  
 relation

(26)

**Like the Youth receiving Maidens' Homage.**

The idea is continued in the verse following the  
 one quoted above

एतेद् यूने युवतयो नमन्त  
 यद् इम् उशन् उशतार् एत्यच्छ ।  
 स जानते मनसा स त्रिकिन्ने  
 स्वयंरो धिष्णामश्च दया ॥ ऋ १०।३०।६

"So do maidens bow before the youthful gallant  
 Who comes loving to them that yearn with love,  
 In heart accordant and in wish one minded  
 Are the worshippers and the divine Waters"

As the loving maidens bow before the loving  
 gallant, so the loving hearts of men bow before the  
 loving Divinity

Here the Divinity is named आपः, Waters

[ In later religious literature we are told of the  
 loving Divine Youth, Krishna of Vrindavan, and

maidens in love with him. The germ of this conception, as seen above, is found in the Veda ]-

The following analogy is that of the acceptance of a maiden by a youth -

स्तोम जुषेया युवश्च कन्यया  
विश्वेदेवौ सवनाव गच्छतम् ॥ ऋ ८।३।५।५

"Accept our song of praise as a youth accepts a maid

O ye Twin Gods, receive all libations here "

{ The Twin Gods are Asvins }.

(27)

### Like the Husband to the Wife.

The metaphor of the " husband of wives " has also been expressed in detail, e. g. in the following -

अच्छा म इन्द्र मतयः स्वर्विदः  
सर्माभीर् विश्वा उद्यतीर् अनूयत ।  
परि श्वजन्ते जनयो यथा पतिं  
मयं न शुण्धु मयवानम् ऊतय ॥ ऋ. १०।४३।१

" O God ! In perfect unison all yearning hymns of mine that have known the light have sung forth thy praise :

As wives embrace the husband, the comely bridegroom, so they encompass the Bountiful One for grace."

(28)

### The Divine Magnetism

The attractions of love between the worshipper and the Deity have found fine comparisons in the following verse

गाव इव ग्राम युयुधिर् इवाश्वान्  
वाश्वेव वत्स सुमना दुहाना ।  
गतिरिव जायाम् आभि नो न्येदु  
धतो दिवः सविता विश्ववारः ॥ ऋ. १०।१४९।४

"As kine turn to the village, as warriors to their steeds, as loving milk-giving cows to their calves;

As the husband to the wife, so may the Deity, the Upholder of the heavens, Lord of all bliss, turn towards us."

(29)

### Like the Chaste Wife

In the following the Divinity has been compared to a chaste wife beloved of the husband

देवो न यः पृथिवीं विश्वधाय  
उपक्षेति हितमित्रो न राजा ।  
पुरः सदः शर्मसदो न वीरा  
अनयद्या पतिलुप्येव नारी ॥ ऋ. १।३।३

"He who is like the shining one (sun), the supporter of the universe ;

Who abides on earth like a king with good friends ;



(31)

## God the Friend

ममिह न एना सख्या वि यौधुय्  
 तव चन्द्र विमदस्य च ऋषेः ।  
 विद्वा इति ते प्रमति देव जामि  
 यद् अस्मे ते सन्तु सख्या शिवानि ॥ ऋ. १०।२३।७

"Never may this friendship be severed

Of Thee, O Deity, and of the sage freed from

passion

We know O God ! Thy brother like love,

With us be Thy auspicious friendship. '

[विमद 'freed from passion,' has also been taken as a proper name]

The key note of this type of worship is the contemplation of friendly love [described in later religious literature as सख्य "friendliness"] between the Deity and the worshipper.

The following prayer is in the same spirit :

भवा नः सुप्ते अन्तमः

सखा वृषे ॥ ऋ. ८।१३।३

"Be Thou most near to us for bliss, a Friend to aid "

(32)

## God the Guest

In the following stanza the Deity is described as "the dearest Guest".

प्रेष्ठो यो अतिथिः सुते  
 मित्रम् इव मित्रम् ।  
 अग्निं रथं न वेत्तम् ॥ ऋ. ८/८४/१

"I laud the Deity, your dearest Guest,  
 Beloved as a friend,  
 Who brings [wealth] like the car."  
 Elsewhere He is spoken of as a "Bosom Friend"  
 and "beloved Guest"

बुधो दमुना अतिथिर्दुराणे । ऋ. ५/४/५  
 अ. ७/७३/९

"As dear House friend, Guest, beloved in the  
 dwelling."

(33)

### The Guest of Every Home

विष्णाविक्षा यो अतिथिः  
 याजयन्तः पुष्टमियम्  
 अग्निं वा दुर्यं वचः  
 सुते ह्यस्य मन्मथिः ॥ ८/७४/२

"Him who is your Guest in every home, the Deity,  
 much beloved, your familiar Friend, may we glorify,  
 exerting strength, in speech and with hymns of power."

As the Divine, the Deity is a Great One, Receiver  
 of oblation; but from the human point of view He is  
 a Guest among men to be treated with love.

विश्वेषाम् अदितिर् यशियानां

विश्वेषाम् अतिथिर् मानुषाणाम् । ऋ. ४।१।२०

शु. य. ३३।१६

"He is Aditi ( the Primal Being ) among all receivers of oblations :

He is Atithi ( a Guest ) among all men."

(34)

" We are Thine "

वयं या ते त्वे इद् विन्द्र मित्रा अपि ध्यासि ।

नदि त्वदन्यः पुरुषूत कश्चन मधवन्नास्ति मर्दिता ॥

ऋ. ८।६६।१३

" Verily, God ! we are Thine, we worshippers depend on Thee.

There is none but Thee to show us grace, O Mighty One, much-invoked."

Here love is expressed by the term "we are Thine." In the following this sentiment is followed by "Thou art ours":

(35)

"And Thou art Ours"

त्वयेद् इन्द्र युजा वयं प्रति व्वरीमहि स्पृधः ।

त्वम् अहमाकं तव स्मरि ॥ ऋ. ८।१२।३२

"With Thee to help us, O God ! may we answer all who defy us

Thou art ours and we are Thine."

(36)

"Had I been Thou"

Sometimes the worshipper takes up an attitude of loving impertinence as in the following

यद् अग्रे स्याम् अहं त्वं त्वं वा घास्या अहम् ।  
स्युष्टे सत्या इहाशितः ॥ ऋ. ८।४४।२३

"If I were Thou and Thou wert I, O God !

Every prayer of Thine should have its due fulfilment here "

Here we find a typical expression of the spirit of friendship ( सख्य ) in the path of devotion ( भक्ति ).

(37)

"I will not sell Thee"

मद्दे च न त्वाम् अद्रिवः पयश्च शुम्भाय देयाम् ।  
न महस्ताय नायुताय वज्रिभ्यो न शताय शतामघ ॥

ऋ. ८।२।५

"O God ! I would not sell Thee for a great price,

Not for a thousand, nor for ten thousand, O Mighty One, nor for a hundred, O Lord of countless wealth !"

[ This unwavering devotion among its followers must have saved the Vedic religion through thousands of years. ]

ज्ञान-योग

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

## THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

We have considered above the Path of love and devotion (called भक्ति-मार्ग) We now turn to the Path of knowledge (ज्ञान-मार्ग) in which what is prayed for is not शर्मन् (protection), अवम् (succour), मृडा (mercy), or वेन (love), but धी (intelligence, the instrument of knowledge, both material and spiritual), मेधा (talent), ऋतु (wisdom), दृष्ट (efficiency) and qualities like these. They represent the principle of light (ज्योतिः). The light of intellect is also called वचस्. The man of knowledge has been called in the Vedas विप्र (wise), ऋषि (poet-philosopher), ऋषि (sage), and by such other names

(38)

### Prayer for Wisdom

The following is a prayer for wisdom

इन्द्र ऋतु न आ भर

पिता पुत्रेभ्यो यथा ।

शिक्षा णो अस्मिन् पुद्गुत यामनि

जीवा ज्योतिर् अशीमादि ॥ ऋ.७।३।२६, सा.२५९, १४५६

अ. १८।३।६७, २०।७९।१

"God! give us wisdom as a father gives wisdom to his sons.

"Guide us, O Much-invoked, in this path. May we live and have light."

Here the Deity is invoked not for fatherly protection (रक्षन्) but for fatherly instruction and guidance (शिक्षा)

[The analogy as father gives wisdom to his sons shows that in the Aryan household the father was the teacher of children. In R̥gveda a woman sage prays

पितर इव गच्छतम् । ऋ १०।३९।६

Instruct me like parents

Here the mother also is spoken of as an instructor ]

(39)

### Prayer for Mental Power

This path of knowledge is an essential part of the Vedic religion. It is the path of the sage who never accepts faith or belief as a substitute for his personal realisation of the highest truth. His is the prayer for knowledge for the power of the mind that leads to the realisation of the highest truth. The following prayer (known as gayatrī after the name of the metre) which has been repeated every day of their lives by generations of Hindus throughout the last four thousand years and more, is for this higher mental power (dhi) that leads to enlightenment.

धूर्धुव स्व तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।

धियो यो न प्रचोदयात् ॥ शु य ३६।१, २२।९, ३०।२

ऋ ३।६२।१०, सा १४६।२

" We contemplate that noble light of the Deity,—that is in the earth, the sky, the heavens ! May He stimulate our mental power "

[ The first three words are additions made in the White Yajurveda 36.3 Usually *आम्* is added at the beginning of the prayer *ओम्* indicates the All pervading Eternal Spirit, the Ultimate Reality ]

One reason why the 'gāyatrī' is considered to be the most representative prayer in the Vedas is that it is a prayer for the highest power that man is capable of possessing—*धी*, higher intelligence—which brings him knowledge, material and transcendental. What the eye is to the body, *धी* or intelligence is to the mind.

*Savita* (सविता), as a name for the Divinity, symbolises the Power of Light. The Divinity is the Power of Light beyond darkness.

सो अन्धे चित् तमसि ज्योतिर् विदन् । ऋ. १।१०.१८

' He knows the light amid blinding darkness.'

वेदाहम् एतं पुरुषं महान्तम्

आदित्यवर्णं तमस परस्तात् । शु. य. ३।१।२८

" I have known This Great Being radiant as the sun beyond darkness "

[ Note the वेदाहम्— ' I have known '— is typical of the man of knowledge ( ज्ञानयोगी ) ]



In the following verse which occurs a number of times as a refrain there is a prayer for victory through higher intelligence (धी):

धिया स्याम रथ्यः सदासाः । ऋ ४।१९-२४।११

"Through higher intelligence may we, car borne, be ever victorious "

The following is an exhortation to the people to seek क्रतु- power through knowledge and wisdom .

सखायः क्रतुम् इच्छत । ऋ. ८।७०।१३

"Comrades ! wish for wisdom (power)".

(42)

How a Brahman is Made

अहमेव स्वयम् इदं वदामि

बुधं देवेभिर् उत मानुषेभिः ।

य कामये ततम् उग्रं कृणोमि

त ब्रह्माणं तम् ऋषिं तं सुमेधाम् ॥ ऋ १०।१२५।५

"I, verily, myself say this

Which is welcome to Gods and men

Him whom I love I make mighty

I make him a Brahman ( wise man ) a Rishi  
( seer ), a man of talent."

[ Here Vāk (वाक्) the Divine power as Speech and Wisdom speaks. ]

The great man is he who has been divinely endo-

wed with wisdom and vision and genius. He is a sage, a seer ( Rishi ), a wise man ( Brahman ).

{ It will appear from the above that according to the Veda one who obtains the love of God becomes a sage, a seer, a Brahman. Any man of any race or tribe can do so. Hence anybody through his higher intellectual gifts may become a Rishi and Brahman.

It is clear from the above that in the Vedic sense, a Brahman is *made* not *born*. To be a Brahman is not to belong to a specially favoured caste, but to be divinely inspired with wisdom. An individual is a Brahman through his possession of this inspiration. Hence one born in the family of a person who by his individual capacity was a Brahman does not become a Brahman by his birth. If he does not possess higher knowledge, he is not a Brahman at all ]

{ The original word is ब्रह्मन् }

(43)

### Encouragement of Knowledge and Valour

The greatness of a nation lies in combining knowledge and valour—ब्रह्म and धृत्. So the prayer

ब्रह्म जिन्यतम् उत जिन्यत धियः.

.. धृत् जिन्यतम् उत जिन्यत नृन् । ऋ ८।३५।१६, १७

“Arouse the power of knowledge and arouse intelligence,

Arouse the power of valour and arouse heroes.”

One who possesses the power of knowledge—**ब्रह्म**— is a Brahman (ब्राह्मण) and one who possesses the power of valour—**धृष्ट**— is a Kshatriya (क्षत्रिय). These are qualitative terms, complementary to each other, and not descriptive terms referring to any tribe or caste.

(44)

### Union of Knowledge and Valour

The Yajurveda glorifies the combination of these two powers— **ब्रह्म** ( knowledge ) and **धृष्ट** ( valour, ruling power ) .

यत्नं ब्रह्म च धृष्टं च सम्यक्षौ चरतः सह ।

तद्भोक् पुण्यं प्रहेय यत्र देवाः सहाग्निना ॥ सु. य. ७।२५

“Where knowledge and valour  
accordant, move together—

That world I will know as holy—

a world where *Shining Ones* are with the Divine ”

The Yajurveda also prays:

ब्रह्म दुर्ह धृष्टं दुर्ह । सु. य. ६।३

“Strengthen knowledge,  
Strengthen valour.”

Such being the outlook of religion, the beginning of religious life is conceived to be an apprenticeship in knowledge and intellectual and moral development—in what has been called *Brahma charya* (ब्रह्मचर्य). It means a systematic course of self-discipline and education by which one qualifies for the higher spiritual life. In a

more particular way it is the process of self culture and sublimation of the sex impulse undertaken by the student of old who aimed at Vedic learning and spiritual knowledge. The Atharva Veda devotes a long section to the glorification of the Brahmacharin. The girl also is mentioned there among those who practise Brahmacharya.

This is how the Vedic Path of knowledge leads to the conception of a "four fold" programme of life (आश्रम-विभाग) in which the first is to be devoted to systematic self-culture (ब्रह्मचर्य).

[ In later times there arose *bhakti* cults that found this self culture and self-discipline—ब्रह्मचर्य—very exacting. They therefore opposed the Vedic Path of Knowledge and prescribed a Path of Devotion divorced from intellectual brilliance and mental enlightenment ]

(45)

**Brahmacharya precedes Knowledge of Brahman**

पूर्वो जातो ब्रह्मणो ब्रह्मचारी

धर्मं च मानसं तपसोदतिष्ठत् ।

तस्माज्जात ब्राह्मण ब्रह्म ज्येष्ठ

देवाश्च सच अमृतेन रुक्मम् ॥ अ ११।५।५

" The Brahmacharin ( student of spiritual knowledge ), born before brahman ( spiritual knowledge ), robed in libation, stood up through spiritual endeavour ( tapas ).

From him arose ( i. e. he revealed ) sacred wisdom, ( the knowledge of ) the highest Brahman and of all the Shining Ones with life that lasts for ever ”

Brahmacharya—a life of spiritual development and education—precedes the knowledge of the Divinity and the other higher things in religion. This is the stand point of ज्ञानमार्ग ( the path of knowledge ) Here the practice of religion begins with self perfection

[ Here also is the true significance of the doctrine of अधिकार, spiritual fitness to speak on higher things. In this respect the Vedic attitude is one of spiritual modesty. There are modern people who, without any kind of fitness, speak glibly about God and soul and other spiritual matters. As G B Shaw points out, there are people in society who would not stand up to speak about ordinary matters of science or history, but would talk with strange confidence about the Ultimate Reality. ]

There is another point regarding this course of self culture. In post-Vedic times, there have been differences of opinion regarding the Ultimate Reality, but none in respect of the essential need of this self-culture. For example, Buddhism and Jainism that differed in metaphysical matters accepted this ideal of self culture. Hence their opposition to the Veda was only partial. The real opposition came from the Leftists—followers of the *Vama marga*, and extremist sects attached to the

bhakti cult who dismissed Brahmacharya or self culture as unnecessary, and set up the crude ignorant man of faith as the ideal worshipper of God

(46)

**Power of the Brahmacharin**

अवांय् अन्य परो अन्योऽद्वयम् पृथक्

गुहा निर्धी निर्हितौ ब्राह्मणस्य ।

तौ रक्षति तपसा ब्रह्मचारी

तत्त कवल कृणुते ब्रह्म विद्वान् ॥ अ ११५।१०

" One hither the other beyond heaven's ridge  
two treasures of sacred lore he hidden

The Brahmacharin protects both these with his  
spiritual power ( tapas ),

knowing Brahman he makes all this his own "

The two types of knowledge — परा, infinite, and  
अपरा, finite — are subjects of search for the spiritual  
student Both these are, as affecting religion, mystic  
( गुह्यानिर्हितौ ) and require spiritual fitness for their  
revelation

(47)

**The Brahmacharin's Creation**

The Brahmacharin, sublimating his sex energy, creates  
on the spiritual plane He vitalises the life of the  
community by the vigour of his spirit so it is said—

ब्रह्मचारी सिद्धति सानौ रेतः पृथिव्या

तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशश् चतस्रः ॥ अ ११५।१२

"The Brahmacharin scatters his virile power on the ridge of the earth,

and by this live the four quarters"

This implies that the man of spiritual enlightenment and culture is at the centre of higher life. From him radiate spiritual energy and inspiration.

[The association of the sublimation of sex-energy with spiritual power is understood in fuller detail in modern times than it was before, owing to the new light thrown on the subject by psychoanalysts led by Freud.]

(48)

### The Spiritual Mother

The three day ceremony of initiation (उपनयन) is taken metaphorically to indicate a new spiritual birth:

आचार्य उपनयमानो

ब्रह्मचारिण कृणुते गर्भमन्त्रः ।

त रात्रिम् तिस्र उदरे विभर्ति

त जात द्रष्टुम् अभि संयन्ति देवाः ॥ अ. ११।५।३

"The Acharya (teacher) initiating the Brahmacharin (pupil) takes him [as a mother the child] into his womb,

Him for three nights he bears [like the mother the child] in his belly.

When he is born (i.e. is a new spiritual being) the Shining Ones converge to see him."

More clearly the passage will read—

"While the Acharya (teacher) initiates the Brahmacharin (pupil) he takes him in charge as the mother takes the child in the womb,

He carries him through three days as the mother carries the child through the period of pregnancy,

After initiation the pupil is a new being like the child born of the mother. He is a wonder, attracting the attention of the highest ranks of beings."

[ The last line has an interesting significance in religious history. What is said here about the wonderful birth of the Brahmacharin, the new spiritual Personality of Man, has also been said in later religious history about the birth of great religious men like Buddha and Jesus. Great men from distant places came to see them at their birth. The Magi came to see Jesus.

It appears, what the Veda had said hundreds of years ago became a tradition in religion and came to be attributed in later times to persons believed to be spiritually great ]

(49)

### Brahmacharya a Divine Power.

According to the conception of Jñānayoga, the Divinity has been spoken of as a follower of knowledge—a Brahmacharin, a sage.

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा देवा मृत्युम् अपाप्रत ।

इन्द्रो ह ब्रह्मचर्येण देवेभ्य स्वर् आमरत् ॥ अ ११।१।१९



"By Brahmacharya and spiritual effort (tapas) the Shining Ones drove away death from them,  
And Indra by Brahmacharya brought heavenly lustre to the Shining Ones."

(50)

### God the Knower

In the following the Deity is described as पुरुविद्वान्, all-knowing:

शिक्षा न इन्द्र राय आ

पुरु विद्वौ ऋचापम् ।

अवा नः पार्ये धने ॥ ऋ. ८।९२।९

"Teach us, God, in power,

Thou Omniscient, adorable with hymns,

Help us in the decisive battle "

Here the Deity is spoken of as Omniscient, All-knowing, and prayed to, for instruction in knowledge that becomes power or wealth (राय).

In the following the Deity is spoken of metaphorically as a sage:

अग्निः शुचिब्रततमः

शुचिर् विप्रः शुचिः कविः ॥ ऋ. ८।४४।२६

"The Deity is Supreme among those who live the holy life. He is the holy sage, the holy Poet."

(51)

## God the Poet

In the following God is spoken of as a Poet :

सुदक्षो दक्षैः कृतुनासि सुकतुर्  
अग्रे कविः काव्येनासि विश्वविद् ।  
चतुर् चक्षुना क्षयसि त्वम् एक इद्  
बावा च आनि गृथिषी च पुथ्यतः ॥ ऋ. १०।११।३

" Most skilful with Thy powers, most wise with wisdom,

O God ! Thou art a Poet knowing all with thy poetic wisdom

Master of good things Thou, the One, art the Lord of all good things,

Those that both heavens and the earth produce."

Take also the following .

कविः कवित्वा दिवि रूपम् आसृजद् । ऋ. १०।१२।७

"The Poet with poetic power has fixed His beauty in the sky."

(52)

## The Poet of Poets

In a specific way the Deity of spiritual knowledge has been named the " Lord (पति) of spiritual wisdom" (ब्रह्मन्)—ब्रह्मणस्पति. The following is a prayer to Him "

गणानां त्वा गणपति इवामहे  
 कवि कवीनाम् उपमध्वस्यमम् ।  
 जेष्टराज ब्रह्मरा ब्रह्मणस्तव  
 आ नः शुष्यन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम् ॥ श्रु. २।२३।१

"We call on Thee, Lord and Leader of hosts,  
 the Poet of Poets, the most famous of all,  
 The Supreme King of spiritual knowledge, O Lord  
 of spiritual wisdom !  
 listen to us with your graces, and sit in the place  
 (of sacrifice) "

(53)

### The Sagest of Poets

The following prayer is similar, though the name of the Divine, Indra { इन्द्र }, is different

नि यु सीद गणपते गणेषु  
 त्वाम् आहुर् विप्रतम कवीनाम् ।  
 न कृते त्वत् नित्यं किं चनरे  
 मह्यम् अकं मयम् चिप्रम् अर्चं ॥ श्रु. १०।११२।१

"Lord of the people ! be seated amid our people  
 Thee they call the Greatest Sage among Poets  
 Without Thee nothing is done, even far away  
 O mighty Lord, wondrous,  
 I worship Thee with a great hymn "

(54)

**Knowledge of the Supreme is Essential.**

ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन्  
 यस्मिन् देवा अधि विन्धे निषिदुः ।  
 यस्तन्न वेद किम् ऋचा करिष्यति  
 य इत् तद् विदुस् त इमे समासते ॥ ऋ. १।१६४।३९

"The Eternal, [the Subject] of the [Vedic] hymn, existing on the supreme region :

in which all Shining Ones have their being :

What will the [Vedic] hymn do for him who does not know That?

But those who have known That—they are perfect."

[For अक्षर, the Indestructible, Eternal, compare the Bhagavad Gita—(which appears to refer to the above hymn)]:

यदक्षर वेदविदो वदन्ति । भ. गी. ८।१०

"That which the knowers of the Veda speak of as Indestructible ( अक्षर )."

Also note—

अक्षर ब्रह्म परमम् । भ. गी. ८।३

"The Indestructible (अक्षर) is the Supreme Being."  
 The word is also explained in the following :

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च ।

क्षर. सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥ भ. गौ. १५।१५

"There are two orders of beings in this world the destructible and the indestructible,

The destructible is all living beings the Supreme is called the indestructible (अक्षर) "

The word is also used elsewhere in the Gita [E. B. VIII 21, XII, 3]

Regarding परमे व्यामन्— the supreme plane of existence, compare the following

यो अस्याध्वक्ष. परमे व्यामन् । ऋ. १०।१२९।७

"He who oversees all this in the supreme region"

This verse asserts the indispensability of the knowledge of the Divine in the higher spiritual life. This is the central point in ज्ञानयोग, the Path of knowledge. This is also the central significance of the Vedas. Veda, from *vid*, to know, means knowledge. According to the Vedas, it is the knowledge of God that matters, and not the word of the Veda (ऋक्). The word is nothing if knowledge does not follow. Here the Veda itself says that the mere memorising of the Vedic hymn is of no spiritual value [Here we find opposition to the Path of Formalism (कर्मकाण्ड) in the sense that कर्मकाण्ड (karma-kāṇḍa) believes in the efficacy of the Vedic word itself as mantra, (मन्त्र) independently of its meaning]

The Bhagavad Gita strongly opposes the theory of karma Kānda and looks down upon people who are attached only to the word of the Veda.

वेदवादस्ता पार्थ नान्यद् अस्तीति वादिनः ।

भ गी २।४२

"( Those unwise people ) who rejoice in the letter of the Vedas, O Partha, saying 'There is naught but this' " The Gita asserts in an emphatic way

यावानर्थ उदपानि सर्वत समुत्तोदये ।

तावान् सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानत ॥ भ. गी २।४६

" What use there is of a tank in a place flooded over with water, so much in all the Vedas is the use for a knower of the Ultimate Reality ( ब्राह्मण ), equipped with his higher knowledge ( विज्ञान ) ' "

This criticism is in keeping with the Rigvedic verse quoted above

Note, however, the distinction made by Gita between वेदवादस्ता, — 'these who rejoice in the letter of the Veda', and वेदविदः, 'those who know the Veda'

That the Ultimate Reality ( अक्षर ) is the subject of the Vedic hymn ( ऋक् ) has been recognised in all ages in India. Note the line quoted above

यदक्षर वेदविदो वदन्ति । भ गी ८।११

" That which the knowers of the Veda speak of as the Indestructible

Note also

वर्दश्च सर्वैर् अहम् एव वय । म गो १३।१८

" And that which is to be known in all the Vedas  
am I ( i.e. the Supreme Being ) "

Even in the middle ages, a popular interpreter of  
religion, Dayaneshwar says

ॐ नमो जा आथा ।

वेदप्रतिपाद्या । शानेश्वर १।१

" I bow to the Primal, Supreme Being whose  
existence is established by the Veda "

It should also be carefully noted that the concep-  
tion of God as the *Eternal Existence* ( अक्षर ), form-  
less and abodeless a transcendental Power beyond all  
material reality, is an idea found only in the Veda  
and in literature derived from the Veda ( like Āranyaka,  
Brahmana, Upanisad etc ) and in no other religious  
literature. In certain non-Vedic religions the Supreme  
Being is a Person with His abode in heaven. Again, in  
those religions God has an anti God or Satan ( a  
Hebrew word meaning 'an adversary' ) and hence His  
existence ( metaphysically speaking ) is limited by that  
of a rival.

Thus the idea of God as an eternal and absolute  
Existence is peculiar to the Vedic religion and philoso-  
phy. An idea similar to this appeared in western  
philosophy in Germany only as late as the later 18th  
century.

राजयोग

THE PATH OF MYSTICISM



This takes us to the loftiest heights of philosophy.

It is doubtful whether the human mind even afterwards surpassed these heights.

(59)

### The One is Many

In recognising unity in diversity, mysticism does not reject the diversity. For it, the One is Many, and the Many are One. It is here that mysticism pays scant regard to arithmetic or logic.

एक एवाग्रिर् बहुधा समिद्ध

एकः सूर्यो विश्वम् अनु प्रभूतः ।

एनैवोपाः सर्वम् इदं वि भा-

त्येकं वा इदं वि बभूव सर्वम् ॥ ऋ ८।५।८।२

[ बालखिल्य १०।२ ]

One is Agni kindled in many a spot ;

One is Surya shining over all ,

One is Ushas illumining all this.

That which is One has become this All.

While speaking of the different visions of the Ultimate Reality, masculine ( as in the cases of Agni and Surya ) and feminine ( as in the case of Ushas ) genders have been used. But for the Ultimate Reality-the One-the neuter gender ( एकम् ) has been used.

(60)

That ( तद् ) representing All . . . .

Similarly in the following, "That" in the neuter ( तद् ),

has been used for the Ultimate Reality of which Deities (देवता) like Agni, Vāyu and others represent different aspects and with which, therefore, the latter are identical.

तद् एवाग्निस् तद् आदित्यस्  
 तद् वायुस् तद् उ चन्द्रमाः ।  
 तद् एव शुक्रस् तद् ब्रह्म  
 ताऽआपः सः प्रजापतिः ॥

शु य. (वा), अ. ३२।१

“Agni is but That, Aditya is That,  
 Vayu is That, Chandramas is That.  
 Light is That, Brahman is That,  
 Apah ( Waters ) are Those, Prajapati is He.”

Here it is made clear that the gender and number of the names of the Divinity are of no account; all stand for the Ultimate Being. Thus to accommodate the plural Deities, Apah ( Waters ), “That” is turned into “Those”, and to indicate the masculine name, Prajapati ( Lord of Creation ), “That” changes into the masculine “He” ( सः ).

[ The Svetāśvatara Upanishad tries to be more grammatical and logical by changing “Those” in the feminine and “He” in the masculine into “That” ( तद् ) in the neuter. It changes the last section of the verse into

तद् आपम् तत् प्रजापतिः । श्वेताश्वतर उ. ८।२

“Apah ( Waters ) are That, Prajapati ( Lord of Creation ) is That ]

(61)

### The One Deity

In the following the Deity ( in the masculine ) is described as the One

मुपर्णे विप्रा. पश्यो वचोभिर्

एक सन्त बहुधा कल्पयन्ति । ऋ १०।११।५

‘ The wise poets with their words imagine the Deity, [ lit ‘the Fine winged (Bird) ] who is One, in many ways ’

Note ‘One-winged’ ( Bird ) is as said above, a symbol for the Divinity

(62)

### All Deities are One Deity

In the following we find a non-symbolic expression of the unity of all Deities who are but aspects of the Same

त्वम् अग्न इन्द्रो वृषभ भताम् अग्नि

त्व विष्णुर् उरुगायो नमस्य ।

त्व ब्रह्मा सविर्विद् ब्रह्मणस्तते

त्व विधर्त सच्चसे पुरन्ध्या ॥ ३ ॥ ऋ २।१

त्वम् अग्ने राजा वरुणो भूतव्रतम्

त्वम् मित्रो भवसि दस्म ईड्य ।

त्वम् अर्यमा सत्यातिर्यस्य सनुज

त्वम् अशो विदधे देव भाजयु ॥ ४ ॥ ऋ २।१

## THE PATH OF MYSTICISM

There is a stage in the Path of Knowledge, ज्ञानयोग, where the knowledge of the Divine is not mere philosophy, the result of a process of thought, it is experience. This has been called Rāja yoga (राजयोग), the Path of Mysticism, which is the path of spiritual realisation. Here the sage speaks of his own personal experience of the Divine.

It is usual to speak of the truth that has been realised in this way as प्राप्त, 'obtained'. The Veda describes the following process by which truth is obtained

(55)

### Stages of Spiritual Realisation

व्रतेन दीक्षाम् आप्नोति

दीक्षयाप्नोति दक्षिणाम् ।

दक्षिणा भद्राम् आप्नोति

श्रद्धया सत्यम् आप्नोति । शु य ११।३०

"By self-dedication one obtains consecration, by consecration one obtains grace

By grace one obtains reverence, and by reverence is Truth obtained."

Here the preparation for obtaining truth is not simple *brahmacharya*, the building up of character and the sublimation of the sex-energy, it is more. It is a process of steady spiritual growth till one is fitted to face Truth in its supreme splendour.

By earnest determination one dedicates oneself to higher ideals and through this self-dedication (मत) one enters spiritual life (दीक्षा) and achieves spiritual refinement and grace (दक्षिणा). This leads to the development of the quality of reverence (भद्रा), through which one is finally led to the possession of ultimate Truth (सत्य).

(56)

### Experience of the Supreme

Thus in mystic realisation, there is the direct experience of the Supreme, the sage speaks in terms of his own personal knowledge.

वेदाहम् एत पुरुष महान्तम्  
आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।  
तम् एव विदित्वा तिमृत्युम् एति  
नान्यः पन्था विद्यत जयनाथ ॥ शु. य ३११८

"I have known this Mighty Being  
    refulgent as the sun beyond darkness;  
By knowing Him alone one surpasses death,  
    *there is no other way to go* "

Here the "I have known" is of extreme value, because it is not the expression of an opinion but the statement of an experience.

Considering the content of the revelation, we find that the Ultimate Reality is compared to light and the finite and material reality to darkness.

[ The Bhṛgavad Gītā quotes part of this verse

सर्वस्य धातारम् अचिन्त्यरूपम्

आदित्यवर्णो तमसः परस्तात् ॥ म गी ८।९

“( He who thinketh upon ) the Supporter of all, of form unimaginable, refulgent as the sun beyond darkness ]

[There is a tradition to consider the Vedic Samhita as *harṇa-kāṇḍa* ( i e mere mantra and sound ) and trace verses like these which have been borrowed by Upanishads, to Upanishads and not to the Vedas. Not only is this practice scholastically erroneous, but also practically so. As spiritual revelation, the original alone has the true value. The Vedic sage who first says, *वदाहम्*— I have known, is the person speaking from experience the Upanishadic sage who borrows the expression, speaks from *श्रुति*— the Vedā—a fact that must have been quite clear to his contemporaries

One who understands this will find how childish it is of those who believe that the Vedas were primitive and materialistic and the Upanishads advanced and spiritual ]

If religion means the overcoming of the limits of finite life and projecting the soul into the infinite, then there can be no real religion without this spiritual realisation ( नान्य. पन्था विद्यते अयनाय )

## The One Divine Existence

To the mystic's vision the Ultimate Being is One. [This unity of the Divine idea we may call Unitheism as distinguished from Monotheism—which believes in a God in heaven surrounded by other beings like angels and archangels and having a rival, the anti God or Satan]. And this is a special feature of Mysticism. It discovers the final and ultimate unity, beyond all plurality. The following verse gives the idea of this unity of the Divine Existence

इन्द्र मित्रं वरुणम् अग्निम् आहुः  
अथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।  
एक सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्य—  
ग्नि यम मातरिश्वानम् आहुः ॥ ऋ. १।१६।४६

"They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and  
there is the Divine Fine winged Garutmat.  
The One Existence the wise call by many names  
as Agni, Yama, Matariswan."

Here the Ultimate Reality is described as एक सद्,  
One Existence.

[ सुपर्ण, Fine winged ( Bird ), is a mystical symbol  
in the Veda for the Ultimate Reality. ]

[The Bhagavad Gita echoes this verse when it  
says about the Supreme Being :

त्वम् अग्ने अदितिर् देव दाशुषे

त्व होत्रा भारती वर्धसे गिरा ।

त्वम् इळा शतहिमासि दधसे

त्व वृत्रहा वसुपते सरस्वती ॥ ऋ. २।१।११

"Thou O Agni ! art Indra, the Hero of heroes.

Thou art Vishnu of the mighty stride, adorable.

Thou, O Brahmanaspati, art Brahman who  
knows power,

Thou, O Sustainer, tenderest us with wisdom (3)

"Thou, O Agni, art King Varuna whose laws  
stand fast;

Thou as Mitra, wonder-worker, art adorable,

Thou art Aryaman, Lord of heroes, encircling all;

O Thou God ! Thou liberal Ansha in the synod. (4)

Thou, God Agni, art Aditi to the offerer of oblation;

Thou, Hotra Bharati, art glorified by the song,

For conferring power, Thou art the hundred-  
wintered Il;

Thou, Lord of wealth, art Vritra-slayer and  
Saraswati." (11)

Here Agni has been identified generally with all other Deities, male and female. This implies that all Deities (देवता) stand for One Divine Being. These verses in detail say the same as Rig. I.164.46 [No. 57] or S. Yaj. 32.1 [No. 60] which identify all Deities with One Divine Essence.



(63)

## God is One

All Deities being One, there is no contradiction in saying that Any of Them is The One. In the following and many other verses Indra is spoken of as The One

यः एको अस्ति दसना

महा उग्रो अभि व्रते । ऋ. ८।१।२७

"He who is One, wonderful, mighty and strong by holy laws "

इन्द्र इत् सोमपा एक

इन्द्रः सुतपा विश्वामुर्

अन्तर् देवान् मर्त्याश्च । ऋ. ८।२।४

"Indra is the One Drinker of libation,  
Indra, Drinker of the pressed juice, Life of all,  
Among celestials and mortals "

स विश्वस्य वरुणस्येव एकः । ऋ. १।२००।७

"He is the One Lord of all holy service "

अयम् एक इत्या पुरुष नि चष्टे निस्पतिः

तस्य व्रतान्यनु वदचरामसि ॥ ऋ. ८।२५।१६

"Here this One God, the Lord of men, looks forth exceeding far and wide, and we, for your welfare, observe His holy laws "

(64)

## The Nonparel

There is no equal, no parallel to Him

न तस्य प्रतिमा अस्ति

यस्य नाम महद् यशः । शु. य. ३२।३

"There is no parallel to Him whose glory, verily, is great."

(65)

### The Model for All

यो विश्वस्य प्रतिमान बभूव

यो अच्युत-च्युत् स जनास इन्द्रः । ऋ. २।१२।९

"He who is the Model for all,

He who shakes the unshaken,

He, O men, is God "

[ Here Indra is the name of the Divinity ]

(66)

### All Gods in One

In the following verse the Rigveda describes the mystical nature of the conception of Deities :

को अद्वा वेद क इह प्र वोचद्

देवां अन्वष्टा पथ्या ३ का ममेति ।

ददध एषाम् अवम् आ सदा सि

परेषु या गुह्येषु ब्रूतेषु ॥ ऋ. ३।५४।५

"Who knows this truly and who will now declare it—  
What paths lead together to the Gods?

Only the lowest aspect of the existence of Those  
is seen,

Who exist on supreme, mystical planes "

The first half-line occurs in Rig. X. 129. 4. also—

की अद्या वेद क इह प्र बोचद्

The query there leads to the final Mystery of the Universe. As the question is the same here, so there is also unity in the spirit of the reply

It is said in the same hymn that there is "One All", pervading everything

एजद् इह पत्यत विश्वम् एक

चरत् पतन्नि विपुण नि जातम् ॥ अ ३५. ८८

"One All is Lord of the moving and the steady, of what walks, what flies—this multi-form creation"

[ One All, विश्वम् एकम्, is in the neuter gender implying One Divine All embracing Essence ].

Thus All Gods are ONE ALL—One in Many, One having many aspects. Hence according to this conception, to say "Ye All Gods" (विश्वे देवाः) and to say "Thou All-God" ( विश्वदेव ) as well as to call any God "All God" ( विश्वदेव ) are to imply the same meaning. Because "They All" stand ultimately for the ONE Essence ( एकम् ).

Note here the mystical indifference to quantity and and number in respect of the Ultimate.

Similarly, take the following refrain of a hymn

महद् देवानाम् अमुरत्वम् एकम् । अ ३५. ११-२२

"Great and single is the Divinity of the Gods."

*In the following All Deities become One in Indra \**

महत् तद् वः कवयश्चाद्य नाम

यद्व देवा मनथ विश्व इन्द्रे ।

सस्य ऋषुभिः पुच्छत प्रियेभिर्

इमा धिय सातये तक्षता नः ॥ ऋ ३।५।४।१७

*"That is, Ye Poets ! your great and lovely title—  
that All Ye Deities exist in Indra,*

*O Friend, much involved ! Thou art with thy dear  
Ribhus*

*frame ye this our hymn for our welfare \**

(67)

**One without a Second, a Third**

य एत देवम् एकवृत्त वेद । १५

न द्वितीया न तृतीयम् चतुर्थी नाप्युच्यते । १६

न पञ्चमो न षष्ठः सप्तमा नाप्युच्यते । १७

नाष्टमो न नवमो दशमो नाप्युच्यते । १८

स सर्वस्मै वि पश्यति यच्च प्राणति यच्च न । १९

तमिद निगत सहः स एष एक एकवृत्त एक एव । २०

सर्वे जस्मिन् देवा एकवृत्तो भवन्ति । २१

अ० १३।४

*"To him who knows this God simply as One  
Neither second nor third nor fourth is He called.  
Neither fifth nor sixth nor seventh is He called  
Neither eighth nor ninth nor tenth is He called.*

He oversees all—what breathes and what breathes  
 not.  
 To him goes the conquering (supreme) power He  
 is the One, the One Alone.  
 In Him All Deities become One Alone "

(68)

### One in Many

तावांस्ते मघवन् महिमोषो ते तन्वः शतम् ॥ ४४

उषो ते वश्वे वद्वानि यदि वासि न्यवुदम ॥ ४५

अ. १३।४

"Such is Thy greatness, O Liberal Lord ! a hundred  
 bodily forms are Thine.  
 Millions are in Thy million, or Thou art a billion  
 in Thy self "

(69)

### The Formless.

स पर्यगाच्चक्षुः अकायम् अव्रणम् अस्नाविर ५ शुद्धम्  
 अपाषाविद्धम् ।

कविर्मानिषी परिरुः स्वयम्भूर् याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्च  
 छाश्चर्तव्यः समान्यः ॥

—यजु. (वा.) ४०।८

He [the Divine Being] pervades (everything).  
 It [the Divine Essence] is bright, un bodied,  
 unwounded, unsinewed, pure, unpenetrated  
 by evil.

He, the Poet, the Wise, the (all) encompassing.

the self existent,—has prescribed aims, according to fundamental principles, unto the everlasting eyars."

In this prose passage the masculine and neuter expressions for the Divinity are mixed up. The passage has a philosophical vein, more typical of the Upanishad than of the Veda. Quite characteristically the chapter of Yajurveda containing this passage has been taken separately as an Upanishad (*Ishopanishad*).

(70)

### The All-pervading

We find a more typically Vedic expression of the same idea in the following.—

ॠ. समाम्यो ३ वरुणो यो अम्यो ३

ॡ. सदेवो ३ वरुणो यो विदेवः ।

यो देवो वरुणो यश्च मानुषः ॥ अ. ४।१६।

"God is That in which things converge. He is

That from which things diverge

God is the Compatriot, He is the Stranger.

God is Divine, He is also Human."

[ Here Varuna is the name of the Divinity ].

In the verse quoted above the all pervasiveness of the Divinity is indicated by the application of mutually opposite terms, beginning with सम् and वि, implying union and opposition, respectively.

[ The description of God as "Compatriot" ( संदेश्य १. e. समदेश्य ) and "Foreigner" ( विदेश्य ) is significant. According to narrow religious views only the members of one's own group or locality are considered as favourites of God and outsiders are regarded as heathens, infidels etc enjoying no Divine bliss. But according to the Veda, God is as much your own as another's, *to be foreign is not to be un Godly or God forsaken* ]

Again, it is a characteristic of mysticism to seek 'God in God,' 'God in man' and 'God in Nature.' Here the dual idea of 'God in God' and 'God in man' is expressed by the terms देव (divine) and मानुष (human)

(71)

## God in the Ocean and in the Drop

In the following verse we have the idea of Divine all pervasiveness expressed in terms of space. God is in the vast, He is in the little. In fact, in the mystic conception, space, like number or time or causality, is of no account.

उत्तैव भूमिर् वरुणस्य राज्ञ

उत्तासौ द्यौर् बृहती दूरेधन्ता ।

उतो समुद्रौ वरुणस्य कुधी

उतास्मिन्नस्य उदके निलीनः ॥ अ. ४।१६।३

" This earth is the possession of God, the King,  
and the high heaven whose ends are far asunder,  
And both the seas are His loins,  
and He lies in this small drop of water "

[ Varuna is the Deity here ]

[ This idea is expressed in the Upanished in the  
peculiar Upanishadic style

अणोरणीयान् महता महीयान् ॥ बठ, २०।४९

" ( The Ātman ) is smaller than the small and  
greater than the great

The Bhagavad Gita expresses the idea of God in  
the minute—

अणोरणीयासम्— भ. गी. ८।९

" Minuter than the minute "

(72)

### God is Everywhere

The following concrete expression of the all perva-  
siveness of the Divine is typically Vedic

यस् तिष्ठति चरति यश्च वञ्चति

या निलाय चरति य प्रतङ्गम् ।

द्वौ सन्निपत्य यन्मन्त्रयेते

राजा तद् वद वरुणस् नृतीय ॥ अ ४।१६।२

" Whoever stands or walks or who moves in secret,  
who goes to his lying down or his uprising "

What two men, sitting together, whisper to each  
other ,



all that God, the King, knows He is the Third<sup>9</sup>  
present there ”

(73)

### The All-seeing

सर्वं तद् राजा यदृणो वि चष्टे  
यद् अन्तरा वेदसी यत् परस्तात् ।  
तस्याता अस्य निमिषो जनानाम्  
अक्षानिव क्षमी नि मिनोति तानि ॥ अ. ४।१६।१

“ All that God, the King, beholds — what lies  
between the heavens and what is beyond them ,

He has counted the twinklings of men's eye-lids,  
As the dice player the dice, so He lays down His  
statutes ’

(74)

### He is in Every Direction

The following is also a typically Vedic and concrete  
expression of the idea of Divine all pervasiveness .

सविता पश्चात् सविता पुरस्तात्  
सवितात्तरात् सविताधरात् ।  
सायता नः सुवतु सर्वताति  
सविता नो ससता दीर्घम् आयुः ॥ ऋ १०।३६।१४

“The Deity from westward, the Deity from eastward  
the Deity from northward, the Deity from south-  
ward,

May He send us all bliss, may He grant us  
long life.”

[ The Deity is Savita ]

## The Divinity in Every Order of Reality

अदितिर् योर् आदितिर् अन्तरेक्षम्

अदितिर् माता स पिता स पुत्रः ।

विश्व देवा अदिनि पञ्चजना

अदितिर् जातम् अदितिर् जनित्वम् ॥

ऋ. १।८९।१० य. २५।२३ अ ७।६।१

" The Divinity is the heaven, the Divinity is the mid-religion ,

the Divinity is the Mother, the Father, the Son ,

The Divinity is All Deities the Divinity is the five classed men,

the Divinity is all that is born and will be born "

Here the Divinity is conceived as feminine Aditi ( अदिति ). She has elsewhere been described as the Mighty Mother [ मातर महीम् अदितिं नाम, यजु. १।५ ] and as the Motherbest ( मातृतमा, ऋ. ६।५०।७ )

The Divinity is the underlying Spirit in Nature, in human relations the unitary Principle in the multiple Deities ( देव ) and in the multiple humanity ( the tribes or nations ) and the Divine Power unites the universe not only in terms of space, but also in terms of time, pervading the past, the present and the future.

[ The Divinity as the Feminine Power or Spirit became the object of worship in Tantra. Compare the

following in *Chandi*, where the above idea is expressed \* in different language :

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु मातृरूपेण सस्थिता ।  
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

“The Goddess who exists in all beings as Mother, obeisance to Her ! Obeisance to Her ! Obeisance to Her, Obeisance ! Obeisance !” ]

(76)

### God in Man

तस्माद् वै विद्वान् पुरुषम् इदं ब्रह्मेति मन्यते ।  
सर्वा ह्यस्मिन् देवता गायो गोष्ठ इवासते ॥ अ. ११।८।३२

“Therefore one who knows man regards him as this Brahman

Verily all Deities abide in him as cows in the pen.”

Here the neuter singular “Brahman” [ the Divinity ] and the masculine plural, “Deities” ( देवताः ) are synonymous terms.

The following are from the *Rigveda*:

देवास्तो हि स्मा मनवे समन्यवो  
विश्वे साक सरतयः । ऋ. ८।२७।१४

“For of one spirit are the Gods with mortal men, Co-sharers all of gracious gifts.”

प्र भ्रातृषु सुदानवो ऽयं द्विता समान्या ।  
मातुर् गभै भरामहे ॥ ऋ. ८।८।३८

O Bounteous Ones ! from time of old,  
We have established our brotherhood and our  
union, in the mother's womb "

(77)

### God in Male and Female, in Youth and Old

The idea of God in Man is particularised in a poetic way in the following "

त्व स्त्री त्व पुमान् अस्मि  
त्व कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।  
त्वं वीर्णा दडेन वचमि  
त्व जातो भवसि विश्वतो मुखः॥ अ. १०।८।२७

"O God ( Brahman ) ' Thou art woman, Thou art  
man, Thou art the boy, Thou the maiden  
Thou art the old man tottering with the staff ;  
Thou existest in all forms "

[ There have been faiths in post-Vedic times in  
India and abroad which consider the woman as inferior  
to man, and the girl as inferior to the boy The Veda  
states clearly that they are equal and equally endowed  
with the Divine spark in them.

Note the graceful precedence given to woman ]

(78)

### The All-pervading Being ( पुरुष )

The idea of the Divinity as an all pervading Being  
has been expressed in grand language in the "Purusha"

hymn of the Veda. And in that hymn the mystical conception of the Many in One finds a remarkable illustration. The Purusha hymn occurs in all the four Vedas [ Rigveda X. 90, Samaveda 613, Yajurveda (V. 5) XXXI, Atharvaveda XIX 6 ]

### The Divinity Immanent in the Universe: in Terms of Space

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रगत् ।

अ भूमिं विश्वतो दृत्वा द्यविः पृथु दद्याद्गुग्म ॥

ऋ १०।१०।१, यजु साम, जमो.

“The Supreme Being, Thousand headed,  
Thousand-eyed, Thousand footed,  
He, pervading the earth on all sides, exists in the  
ten directions ”

‘Thousand’ ( सहस्र ) means ‘innumerable.’ Hence there is no arithmetical coherence between head and hands. The Atharvaveda, however, attempts such coherence by reading—

सहस्रबाहुः पुरुषः । अ. ११।६।१

“The Supreme Being, thousand handed ”

“Thousand headed ” etc. imply the manifestation of the Divinity through the vastness of creation. दद्याद्गुग्म — “Ten fingers”—are the ten directions or regions. [ Compare the “ten surrounding arms” in the following.—

इय या नाभ्यङ्किणा रूपा राक्षिष्या कृता ।

चित्रेय प्रत्यदृश्यायत्पन्तर्देहासु बाहुषु ॥ ऋ ८।१०।१३

“ She ( Ushas ) yonder bending low, rich in rays,  
clad in red hues,

Is seen advancing like one wonderful, amid the  
ten surrounding arms ” ]

(79)

### The Divinity Immanent in the Universe. in Terms of Time

पुरुष एवेद सर्वे यद् भूत यच्च भव्यम् ।

उतामृतत्वस्येयानां यद् अचेनातिरोहति ॥ ऋ १०।९०।२

Purusha is all that has been and that will be  
And He is the Lord of immortality which trans-  
cends through matter ( food )

Here the Divinity is described as all pervading in  
respect of time—He pervades the past and the future,  
just as in the present, in respect of space He pervades  
all regions ( ten quarters ) अन्न is food, material susten-  
ance When we contemplate the Absolute existing  
in space and time, we find His Being glorified through  
the world of matter and phenomena just as the body  
of man prospers through food

Thus the Divine as Purusha makes the material  
universe a means of Self expression The Divine  
manifests His glory through creation.

[ In later religious ideology this Purusha conception is represented by that of Bhagwad—the Lord of splendour ( भगवत्splendour ). The speciality about this conception is that, instead of the neutral ( निरुपाधि ) Absolute ( अक्षर ), the God of qualities ( ईश्वर ) is contemplated. So in this conception, the beauty and splendour of the universe and man are part of the glory ( उपाधि ) of the Divine. Hence matter is not alien to God, the finite world of time and space only manifests the splendour of God. ]

(80)

### God is Greater than His Splendour

एतवान् अस्य माहमा ऽता जार्याश्च पुरुषः ।

पादो ऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिषादस्यामृत दिवि ॥ ऋ १०।१०।३

"Such [ that He pervades all space and time ] is His splendour, but Purusha is greater than this.

All beings are a quarter of Him; three quarters make the immortality in the supreme region."

This verse implies that the Divinity is not co-extensive with the universe or creation. The splendour of the universe is only an aspect of Him; He has other aspects that are unmanifested and transcendental.

The arithmetical 'one-quarter' and 'three-quarters' are not to be taken literally, in the quantitative sense.

### Creation, a Grand Sacrifice

What is God's creation ? In what relation does He stand to it ? It is not like the making of a pot by the potter. It is through a spiritual act—a sacrifice—through which the Absolute (अक्षर) reveals Its splendour.

The idea of sacrifice has been poetically worked out in the Veda.

यत् पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञम् अतन्वत । १  
वसन्तो अस्यासीद् आग्न्य ग्रीष्म इष्म शरद्धविः ।

ऋ १०।१०।६

"Of the yajña ( sacrifice ) that the Shining Ones prepared with Purusha as the libation,  
Spring was the butter, summer the wood and autumn the offering "

Here it is said that creation proceeds from yajña ( sacrifice ) Elsewhere in the Rigveda it is said that creation proceeds from tapas ( spiritual striving )

ऋतं च सत्यं चार्भाढात् तपसो ऽध्यजायत ।

ऋ १०।१९०।१

"Eternal Order and Truth were born of perfect spiritual striving."

In the Atharva veda yajña is classified with tapas as a power that upholds the earth:

सत्यं बृहद् ऋतम् उग्रं दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं वारयन्ति ।

अ. १२।२।१



"Truth, order that is great and stern, consecration, spiritual striving, prayer, sacrifice—these uphold the earth."

Thus yajña as the means of creation indicates the spiritual nature of the latter. Creation is not mechanical construction. it is a supreme spiritual act revealing Divine splendour.

(82)

### The Divine Architect

विश्वकर्मन्

The Divine Architect—विश्वकर्मन्—is but another aspect of Purusha—the Divinity manifested through creation. The Veda applies similar terms to Visvakarman, but there is a slight difference. The Vishvakarman hymns emphasise the Divine Personality as the One God

विश्वतश्चतुर् उत विश्वतोमुखं  
विश्वतोबाहुर् उत विश्वतस्यात् ।  
स चाहुभ्या धमति स पतत्रैर्  
द्यावाभूमी जनयन् देव एकः ॥

ऋ. १०।८१।३, अ. १३।२।२६

शु. म. १७।१९

"He who has eyes on all sides and mouth on all sides,

arms on all sides and feet on all sides:

He, the One God, producing heaven and earth, wields them together with his arms as wings."

The Vedic verse quoted above also appears in the Svetaśvatara Upaniṣad (श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद्), III. 14. The following verse there, coming after three expository verses on the Vedic conception of the Puruṣa may be taken as explaining the mystical secret of the Puruṣa—that He may also be described in opposite terms as having no feet, no eyes etc :

अपाणिपादो जवनो ग्रहीता  
 पश्यत्यक्षुः स शृण्वत्यकर्णः ।  
 स वेत्ति वेद्यं न च तस्यास्ति वेत्ता  
 तम् आहूय अम्य पुरुष महान्तम् ॥

श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषत् ३।१९

“Without hands and feet, he grasps and walks ;  
 without eyes he sees, without ears, he hears.  
 He knows what is knowable, but there is no  
 knower of Him .

Him they have called the Great Primal Being  
 ( Puruṣa ) ”

(83)

### The Nest of All Beings

From the idea of the One Creator we come to another mystic conception—the unity of the universe in Him :

येनस् तत् पश्यन् निहित गुहा सद्  
 यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकनाडम् ।  
 तस्मिन्निदं सच वि चैति सर्वं  
 स ओतः प्रोतिश्च विभुः प्रजासु ॥

शु य. ३२।८

*"The loving sage beholds that mysterious  
 Existence*

*wherein the universe comes to have one nest,  
 Therein unites and therefrom emanates all.*

*The Lord is the warp and woof in the created  
 beings."*

In this verse the Divinity has been spoken of both as the Ultimate Essence, in the neuter gender, as—*तत् सत्*—That Existence, and as the Lord, in the masculine—*विभुः*.

*गुहानिहितम्*, 'hidden in the cave', is a symbolical expression for "mystical" or "mysterious."

[With 'The Lord is warp and woof in created things', compare Bhagavad Gita

*मयि सर्वम् इदं प्रोतं सुले माणिगणा इव ।*

• भ. गी ७।३

"All this is threaded in Me (the Divine) as pearls on a string." The word *प्रोत* is common between the passages. ]

In the Atharva Veda ( Ch II. I 1 ), instead of the bold poetic metaphor, एकनीडम् — 'one nest'—there is the more philosophical एकव्यम् — 'one form,' 'alike' Presumably the Atharva Veda replaced the poetic metaphor by a philosophical expression (though some orientalists think the Yajurveda borrowed the verse from the Atharva-veda )

(84)

### The Ātman

अकामो धीरो अनृतः स्वयम्भू  
रसेन तृप्तो न दुतश्चनो नः ।  
तमेव विद्वान् न विभाय मृत्योर्  
आत्मान धीरम् अजर युवानम् ॥ अ. १०।८।४४

"Desireless, firm, immortal, Self existent,  
contented with the essence, lacking nothing, is He  
One fears not death who has known 'Him,  
the Soul ( Ātman )— serene, ageless, youthful."

Here we find the conception of the Divine as the Supreme Spirit ( Ātman ), ever steady, ever young, undecaying. This conception is very common in Upanishads.

As Divine attributes are also ideal human attributes, the highest efforts of sages have been directed in approximating this ideal.

The conception of the Yogi is similar upto a point to the conception of the Divinity here The Yogi is desireless

(अकाम) and hence free from the impact of animal nature, he is serene with the heroism of the spirit (वीर); he is satisfied with the essence of things (रस), perceived spiritually, and hence does not depend on sense-perception for happiness; and so he becomes complete within himself. And though the physical body is subject to decay, he remains unworn (अजर) and ever youthful (युवा) in spirit and has no fear of death. This transcendence of animal nature and of old age and death makes a high type of man: he may be called the spiritual superman.

[The *Bhagavad Gita*, rightly described as a *Yoga-shastra*, "a treatise on yoga," fully expounds the conception of the yogi or the spiritual superman. It speaks of the स्थितप्रज्ञ, स्थितधी—the man in whom प्रज्ञा and धी—the highest powers of the mind—have been securely established.]

रस (rasa) is a most significant word in Sanskrit. It is the spiritual essence of things: the spiritual flavour, as it were. A Sanskrit rhetorician has described poetry as "वाक्य रसात्मकम्" "language with flavour in it." In this sense we may speak of the Divine as a Poet, enjoying the sweet flavour of reality: hence, He is not only सद्—Existence, not only चिद्—Intelligence, but also आनन्द—Joy. The association of *rasa* (रस) with the Divine lies at the basis of the Bhakti (भक्ति) cult.

Compare the Taittiriya Upanishad :

रसो वै सः । रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वा ऽऽनन्दी भवति ।

तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत् । २।८

"He, verily, is *rasa* (the Essence, the Source of flavour). By attaining Him, the *rasa* — the Essence — one is filled with joy."

[The conception of the ideal person as अकाम, "desireless" has formed the essential element of Buddhistic ethics and metaphysics. According to these, it is काम, "desire", that involves us in the pursuit of pleasure and all the evils of life — one who has renounced desire keeps clear of all those evil consequences. The supreme state of being, in which desire has been extinguished, has been called Nirvana ( निर्वाण )].

(85)

### The Universal Soul

चित्र देवानाम् उदगाद् अनीक

चक्षुर् मित्रस्य वरुणस्याग्नेः ।

आप्रा यावापृथिवी अन्तरिक्ष

सूर्य आत्मा जगत्सु तस्थुषश्च ॥ ऋ १।११५।१

( य., अ. )

"The marvellous Presence of the Gods has risen,  
the Eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni:

The Soul of all that moves or stands still,—

Surya, prevailing the heaven, the earth, the  
mid region."

Here Surya is spoken of as the अनीक (face, presence) of all Gods, i. e. the Symbol for the Divinity. Similarly, He is the *eye* — the seeing faculty, the inner intellectual principle — of the Divinity, contemplated as Mitra, Varuna and Agni. This is just another form of saying—

इन्द्र मित्र वरुणम् अग्निम् आहुर्...

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ॥ ऋ १।१६।४।६

"They have spoken of Him as Agni, Mitra, Varuna, Indra: the one Existence the sages speak of in many ways".

[ Perhaps here one should say, एकं चिद् — there is 'One Intellectual Power' — the eye of Gods ] Finally, the idea is more fully stressed by the use of the word आत्मन् for Surya. "He is the Soul in all beings, moving and non moving." This Soul idea is the dominant conception of the Divine in the Upanishads.

As in the *gayatri* verse, so here, the Sun is not the Sun only of the material world ( पृथिवी ) but of the other two worlds also. द्यौ and अन्तरिक्ष — the infinite sky and the mid region.

(86)

### The Quest of the Divine

Mysticism, being an experience, does not consist only in revelation — the complete mastery of ultimate knowledge, it also signifies a quest of the unknown. It asks

questions and the answers come as new visions unfold themselves.

अचिकित्वान् चिकितुषश्चिद् अत्र  
 ऋवीन् पृच्छामि विद्महे न विद्वान् ।  
 वि यद् तस्तम्भ पळिमा रजास्य-  
 जस्य रूपे किमपि सिद् एकम् ॥ ऋ १।१६।६

"Unknowing I ask of those who know—the sages—  
 as one ignorant for the sake of knowledge :

What was that ONE in the form of the Unborn,  
 that has fixed firm these world's six regions ? "

(87)

### Whom Shall We Worship?

In the hymn, of which the following is the first stanza, the refrain, occurring eight times, is a query regarding the Ultimate Reality.

द्विरप्यगर्भः समवर्ततामे  
 भूतस्य जातः पतिर् एक आसीत् ।  
 स दाधार पृथिवीं द्याम् उतेमा  
 कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥ ऋ १०।१२।१

[ What God shall we adore with our oblation ? ]

" The Divinity [ that ] existed in the beginning,  
 Who was One Lord of all created beings,  
 Who fixed and holds this earth and sky :  
 What God shall we adore with our oblation ? "



### The Final Mystery

In the following the Veda leaves the final question on ultimate things unanswered

को अद्वा वेद क इह प्र वीचत्  
 कुत आजाता कुत इय विस्तृष्टिः ।  
 अवाङ् देवा अस्य विसर्जनेना-  
 द्या को वेद यत आबभूव ॥ ऋ. १०।१२९।६

"Who verily knows, and who can here declare it—  
 Whence was it born and whence came this creation?  
 And did the Shining Ones appear with its production?  
 But then who knows whence it has arisen?"

(89)

### Who Knows?

इय विस्तृष्टिर् यत आबभूव  
 यदि वा दधे यदि वा न ।  
 यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्  
 त्सी अद्वा वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥

ऋ. १०।१२९।७

"He, from whom this creation came into being,  
 whether He upheld it or He did not,  
 He who oversees it in the eternal region,  
 He verily knows it or perhaps He does not know."

The Veda recognises the Supreme Being overseeing all ( अद्यक्ष परमे व्योमन् ), but leaves unanswered the question of whence—from what material—this creation came into being.

In the Purusha hymn the Veda gives a symbolical answer through the analogy of sacrifice: that a yajña was performed with the Primal Being, in which spring was the butter, summer the fuel and autumn the libation. Here, to a logical query, to which a literal answer is required, no reply is given. This shows that such a question is better left open.

This attitude, typical of higher thought, leads to a very delicately poised sense of truth which precludes every type of dogmatism. In this sense the Vedic attitude here is philosophical rather than religious, in the elementary sense of the latter term, according to which a fixed and literal explanation is given in respect of every aspect of the unseen reality

[ Lord Buddha was maintaining this Vedic attitude when he kept silent about the Ultimate Reality. He neither accepted nor rejected the theory of the Ultimate Being. The story in the *Kevatta Sutta* of *Digha Nikaya*, said to be told by Lord Buddha, is a fictional rendering of the Vedic hymn on Creation ( नासदासत् सृक्त ) and of the verses that have been quoted above from it.

The story says that a certain Bhikshu in a state of samādhi wished to know where earth, water, fire and air

were finally dissolved. With the help of his spiritual powers he visited four *Devatās*. They were unable to answer the question and asked him to go to Indra. Indra directed him to some higher Divinity. The Bhikṣu moved to higher heavens till he found himself in *Brahma loka*. There he put his question to Brahmā who found that he did not know the answer to this question. But he did not wish to expose his ignorance. He described his divine glories, but the Bhikṣu said he came to know not what, Brahmā was like, but what was the final state into which the four elements were dissolved. Then Brahmā took him aside and said, "All the *Devatās* living in my heaven believe me to be omniscient, I will not confess my ignorance before them. But really I don't know where the four elements finally lose themselves."

Brahmā's "I don't know" in the Buddhist story is obviously a folk tale rendering of—

यो अस्याप्यज्ञः परमे व्योमन्  
 त्सो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥

'He who oversees it in the eternal region,  
 He verily knows it or perhaps He does not know.'

The story proceeds further. Brahmā asks the Bhikṣu to go back to Buddha and ask him the question. He comes to Buddha and puts his question—"Where do the four elements finally lose themselves?" Buddha

says the question is wrongly put. It should be—"Where do the four elements lose their identity; where do length and shortness, the gross and the fine, the real and the unreal, name and form, cease to exist?" and the reply to the question is—

"In the consciousness beyond the power of vision, and in the eternally bright lustre, the four elements lose their identity."

Here the state beyond the real and the unreal refers to the same as described in the Veda.

नासद् आसीन्नोसद् आसीत् तदानीम्

"Then there was neither unreality nor reality."

The metaphysical idea presented in the above Vedic verse has also been rendered into a curious popular story in Skandha Purana. But though crude the legend has a significance. It is that the ultimate truth cannot be stated as a simple fact: it is shrouded in mystery the same idea as given in the Rigvedic verse quoted above. The story is this. Brahmā and Vishnu both tried to trace the two ends of a vast *linga* (i.e. origin) which they found spreading before them. Vishnu assumed the form of a tortoise and went down, whilst Brahmā embodied himself as a swan and flew upwards. Both travelled for one thousand years (of the gods) at the speed of the human mind and yet they could not fathom it. Vishnu came back and confessed

"For the finite the eloquent man, for the infinite the mute."

But the demand for expression is most urgent in man; and the mystic sage finds that he must express what from the nature of the experience is ineffable. *Failing to interpret in terms of the intellect he seeks the language of the spirit.* First, he accepts poetry, with the subtle power of rhythm, as the medium of expression. Secondly he extends the expressive power of words by investing them with symbolism. In a symbol far more is meant than meets the ear.

The following refers to mystical language.—

चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि  
तानि विदुर् ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः ।  
गुहा त्रीणि निहितानि नैव्यन्ति  
तुराय वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति ॥ ऋ १।१६।४।८५

"Speech of four types has been measured ;  
the sages who are wise know them.

Three that are hidden in the cave ( i. e. are mystic )  
make no motion ;  
men speak the fourth ( type of ) speech."

The three types of speech that make no motion are the silent speech—or the silence that is more eloquent than language—in respect of the infinite.

The silence, however, is partially broken with the

help of poetry and symbolism. A little sound conveys, so to speak, the import of a great silence behind it.

(92)

### The Great Secret

The expression गुहाहित or गुहानिहित — the deep mystery—has been frequently used in the Vedas. The following verse says that in the Ultimate Mystery that is the Divine, the whole universe finds its rallying point

वन्तस्तत् पश्यन् निहित गुहा सद्  
यत्र निश्च भवत्यकनीडम् । यजु. ३२।८

"The loving sage sees That Being which is mysterious

That in which the universe becomes as one nest

[ Universal fellowship, which was preached by the Vedas in ancient times has been set again and again as a human ideal in different ages by poets, saints and mystics ]

(93)

### Realisation of the Mystic Knowledge

The spiritual experience of the sages—the revelation of the Ultimate Reality—could not be interpreted and transmitted in terms of the intellect. It had to be realised through the spirit. The spiritual knowledge was communicated from sage to sage through the kindling of the spirit. It needed a disciplined life to fit one for the higher knowledge.

निधीयमानम् अपगूढं अपु  
 प्र मे देवाना व्रतपा उवाच ।  
 इन्द्रो विद्वोऽनु हि त्वा चक्ष  
 तेनाहम् अग्र अनुशिष्ट आगाम् ॥ ऋ. १०।३२।६

"Of Thee who art lying hidden in the waters,  
 One who maintains the law of Gods spoke to me.  
 Indra, who knows, beheld and showed Thee.  
 By him instructed, O Agni, I come."

Here the sage says he has realised the mystic secret through instruction received from Indra. In the following verse he explains the value of spiritual instruction [Indra seems to be the name of the Acharya].

(The last three lines of this stanza occur also in Rig III 2 8.)

(94)

### The Guide in the Unknown Land

अज्ञेनित् क्षेत्रिद ह्यग्राह  
 स प्रैति धेश्विदानुशिष्टः ।  
 एतद् वै भद्रम् अनुशातनस्यो-  
 त सुतिं विन्दत्यग्रासीनाम् ॥ ऋ. १०।३२।७

"One ignorant of the land asks of one who knows it;  
 he travels forward instructed by the knowing guide.  
 This, indeed, is the blessing of instruction:  
 one finds the path that leads directly forward."

This means that the Acharya or teacher is a spiritual guide of the disciple. He helps the inexperienced person to find for himself what has to be known. The Acharya shows the way.

This establishes a fine principle of education, whether spiritual or intellectual. The rôle of the teacher is that of a guide. The pupil learns by himself.

Applied to religion it means that every one has to find for oneself what the secret truths regarding the Ultimate Reality are. In doing so he needs guidance, but the discovery must be his own.

[This presents a contrast to the later theory regarding the Guru who was supposed to be alone capable of spiritual discovery, and from whom the disciple was to receive it second hand. All that the disciple had to do was to place trust in the Guru, not to outgrow the need of his help. He did not go forward, he perpetually followed the Guru. This view of the Guru or the teacher is anti Vedic.]

We can describe the course of spiritual life by the word — *आगे* — one goes forward.

(95)

### Universality of Spiritual Knowledge

Though the realisation of the ultimate knowledge is through the finding of the spirit and requires the



*Acharya*, spiritual preceptor, as the guide, yet the knowledge, when realised, is for the world as a whole. Hence Vedic truths are not secrets to be carefully kept from the public. The sage who realises them feels called upon to declare them to his fellowmen, irrespective of their social or cultural status. This feature of the Vedic religion distinguishes it from occult sects. In the following verse the sage says that he will give the holy words of wisdom to the whole society

यमेमा वाच कस्याणीम् आवदानि जनेभ्यः ।

ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्या शूद्राय चाप्यय च शूद्राय चारणाय च ॥

यजु २६।२,

"So may I speak these blessed words to the people at large:

to the Brahmana and the Kshatriya, to the Vaisya and the Śūdra, to my own people and to the foreigner."

[ The so called Brahmins of a later age who thought that the Vedas should not be taught to any one who was not a member of the Brahmin caste were going against the Veda itself ]

विभूति-योग

THE PATH OF SPLENDOUR

## THE PATH OF SPLENDOUR

The Path of Mysticism ( राजयोग ) follows a super-sensuous preception, the Path of Splendour ( विभूतियोग ) the sense perceptions themselves. Here the sage perceives the Divine presence in all that is splendid and beautiful in the universe. The path of Mysticism is the path of the sage ( ऋषि ) as a recluse ( मुनि, योगी ), the path of Splendour is the path of the sage as a poet ( कवि ). Spiritual consciousness on this plane is essentially poetic consciousness. The poet sage expresses his exquisite astonishment before the visions of glory and wonder. With him worship is ecstatic wonder. As a result, the words of worship are as much poetry as part of religion. In fact the world has not known sublimer or more beautiful religious poetry than found in the Vedas.

The poetic-spiritual attitude that we have described ( after the Bhagavad Gita ) is the Path of Splendour ( विभूतियोग ) has this speciality—that it never loses touch with the material reality which is realised by sense-perception, though it seeks a transcendental, beyond the senses. Though sometimes the prayer becomes purely abstract and conveys metaphysical and moral ideas, still, in its more typical form, the abstract idea is conveyed by an image of beauty and glory. This image carries with it the highest poetic value.

## The Light Divine

The source of all splendour is light. Hence light is the central object of admiration for the poet-sage. Light (ज्यातिः) also is the symbol for all splendour and glory of the spirit. It stands for truth (सत्य), order (ऋत), reality (सद्), goodness (स्वास्ति), beauty (भी, चारुता), intelligence (धी), wisdom (ऋतु), bliss (मद्र), immortality (अमृत),—for God (देव) and the noble man (आर्य), whereas the opposite of light—darkness (तमस्)—stands for untruth (असत्य), disorder (अनृत), unreality (अस्तु), evil (अशिव, दुरित), ugliness (अभी), ignorance (अविद्या), death (मृत्यु)—and for the Demon (वृत्र) and the wicked man (दस्यु, दास). Light is associated with fire (अग्नि), the sun (सूर्य), the moon (साम), the dawn (उषा) etc.

The symbolic acceptance of Agni led to the identification of the name with the inner Principle of light whether associated with fire or lightening or the sun. Agni is thus contemplated as the Effulgent One, sending His light to earth, to the sky and to water, and supplying the life energy to plants. Surya is the source of life. Thus he becomes the Inner Principle of light and life—सूर्यो आत्मा जगत्सस्युपस्थ—“Surya, the Atman within what moves and what stands still.” Extremely poetic are the visions of the breaking of

Dawn ( उषा ) and the glory of light spreading over the world

The negative and positive aspects of the Vedic religion may respectively be found in the conception of Indra the killer of the power of darkness ( वृषहा ) and the bringer of light ( स्वर्दिद् ).

The following verse suggests the transcendental light through the earthly

उद् वय तमसस्पारि ज्योतिष्पत्यन्त उत्तरम् ।

देव देवत्रा सूर्यम् अगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तमम् ॥ ऋ १।५०।१०

( सा, य., अ. )

'Looking at the transcendent light beyond the darkness, we

have come to Surya God among gods, the Light that is most excellent'

ज्योति ordinarily means light, but उत्तरम्, transcendent, takes the idea to a higher plane. Surya, though connected with the object of physical perception, implies more than a physical object its light most excellent symbolises the spiritual glory

(97)

### The Lord of Light

शीर्ष्णं शीर्ष्णो जगतस् तस्युषम् पति समया विश्वम् आ रज ।

सप्त स्वधारः मुविताय सूर्ये वहन्ति हरिता रथे ॥ १५ ॥

तमधुर् देवहित शुक्रम उचरत् ।

पश्येम शरद सत जीवम शरद यतम् ॥ १६ ॥ ऋ ५।६६

"Him who shines crest by crest equally on all,  
Surya, the Lord of what moves and what is still,  
The seven Sister Bays bear in the car, for (the  
world's) well-being.

"That lustrous Eye, God-ordained, arising,  
May we see a hundred autumns. May we live a  
hundred autumns."

The union of light and life sums up, in the physical  
the spiritual sense, the Vedic outlook on life and religion.

(98)

### Destroyer of Darkness and Evil

आ वि वाच्या परिरापस्व तमासि च  
ज्योतिष्मन्त रथम् ऋतस्य तिष्ठसि ।  
उद्दृश्यते भीमम् अमित्रदम्भन  
रक्षोदण गोत्रभिद स्वविदम् ॥ ५ २।२३।२

"Having chased away the wicked ones and darkness,  
Thou mountest Thy refulgent car of Order,  
The awful car, O Lord of wisdom! that subdues the  
foe, slays the wicked, cleaves the stall of light  
and brings the light."

Here light (ज्योतिः) and Eternal Law-Goodness-  
(ऋत) are identified and hence darkness (तमस्) im-  
plies the power of evil—the enemy (अमित्र), the  
wicked one (रक्ष).

In *Rigveda* X 103 6 the expression गोत्रभिदम्—'cleaver of the stall of kine' is followed by गोविदम्—'bringer of kine'. Here स्वर्विदम्—'bringer of light'—occurs for गोविदम्—'bringer of kine.' Evidently गो and स्वर् are synonymous terms meaning 'light'. So गोत्रभिदम् really means "cleaver of the stall of light."

The word भौम ( awful ) indicates the sternness of Divine Law, ( ऋत ). It corresponds to the moral idea of light—viz. goodness.

( The Deity is Brahmanaspati, Lord of Prayer ).

( 99 )

### The Life-Giver

बृहत्सुग्नः प्रसवीता निवेशनो

जगतः स्थातुर्दमयस्य यो वर्धा ।

स नो देवः सविता शर्म यच्छ-

त्वस्मे ध्याय निरुथम् अदसः ॥ ऋ. ४।५।३।६

"Most gracious God, who brings (the world) to life and keeps (it) in repose;

He who controls what moves and what is still,

May He, Savita the God, grant us grace,

for serene life and three fold bar against evil."

Here सविता—Savita—has been described as प्रसवीता—the producer of life. Compare—स ज्ञ मुवाति सविता. ( ८.८२.९ ) 'He who generates life is Savita.' ;

The prayer is of a general type, seeking protection against evil.

### Glorious and Beloved Supremacy

अस्य हि स्वराजस्तेर सावतु कचन प्रियम् ।

न भिनन्ति स्वराज्यम् ॥ ऋ ५।८२।२

"This Savita's own supremacy, most glorious and beloved,

None can diminish

Here the effulgence of Savita is not only glorious, but also beloved. The word *Swarajya* (स्वराज्य), one's own supremacy or sovereignty, has often been used in the Vedas

### Source of Goodness

विश्वानि देव सवितर् दुष्टानि परा मुव ।

यद् भद्र तज्ज आ मुव ॥ ऋ ५।८३।५

'Savita! God! send far away all evil

Send us what is good'

Here the idea of physical glory is converted into that of moral power

[We found a word play between Savita (सविता) and प्रसवाता (inspirer of life), here there is a word-play on Savita (सविता) and the verb मुव (move) in परा मुव, 'move away', and आ मुव 'move in, 'bring', derived from the same root (मु, सू) as the word Savita (सविता).]



(102)

## Source of Beauty

अनागमो अदिते देवस्य सवितुः सवे ।

विश्वा वामानि धीमहि ॥ ऋ ५।८।१६

"Sinless, for noble power under the influence of  
Savita, God,

May we obtain all things that are beautiful "

Here the power of goodness is contemplated to lead  
to the power of beauty

अदिति, the Primal Divine Power, is taken in the  
abstract here as in the following description of Agni

विश्वेगाम् अदितिर् यज्ञियानाम् । ऋ. ४।१।२०

'The divine power among all adorable Ones'

[ Here also there seems to be a word play on  
Savita ( सविता ) and Sava ( सव ), influence ]

(103)

## Source of Truth

आ विश्वदेव सत्यति सृजेरद्या वृणीमहे ।

सत्यस्य सवितारम् ॥ ऋ ५।८।१७

'We with our hymns elect to day the all God,  
Lord of the good,

Savita, whose decrees are true.'

The expression 'we elect' ( वृणीमहे ) implies the  
willing acceptance of the Divine Power—the Power of  
goodness and truth. For the word, compare—

विशो न राजानं कृणानाः ( ऋ १०।१२४।८ )

“ As the people elect the King.”

[ Here also there is the word play on सव and सविता. ]

विश्वदेव—all-God—is an interesting Vedic expression, As the Veda ignores the difference of number, it addresses “all Gods”—विश्वे देवाः in the same way as it addresses one God as “All God” ( विश्वदेव ). This implies that though the Veda speaks of many Gods it does not recognise the real numerical significance of ‘many’. The many—i. e. the multiple conceptions of God—are contained in the One. God is One—but is contemplated in many ways. This is mystical conception peculiar to the Veda.

The three verses quoted above which belong to the same hymn and appear in succession indicate the three principal values or ultimates—Goodness ( भद्रम् ), Beauty ( वामम् ) and Truth ( सत्यम् ). It was many centuries after the Vedas that these values were formulated by the philosophers of Greece. It is notable that the Vedas anticipate them in their characteristic form.

[ There are other words too for these three values; e. g. शिव, स्वस्ति for Goodness, शो, चारुता for Beauty, ऋत for Truth. The word सुदरम् for beauty appears to be a modern one ]

(104)

## The Overseer

यो विश्वाभि वि पश्यति

भुवना स च पश्यति ।

स नः पूषाविता भुवन् ॥ ऋ. ३।६२।१

" He who sees all from above and aside,  
sees all living things together,

May He, Pushan, be our Saviour

Here there is on the one hand the idea of the all  
seeing sun, and on the other of the omniscient Divinity

(105)

## Inspirer of the Soul

तम् इक्षान जगतस्तस्थुषस् पति

धियजिन्वम् अवसे हृमहे धयम् ।

पूषा नो यथा वेदसामसद् नृधे

रक्षिता पायुरदब्ध स्वस्तये ॥ ऋ. १।८१।५

" Him, the Lord of what moves and what stands  
still,

The inspirer of the soul, we invoke for our aid.

May the Deity, our Protector and our Guard  
Who is unavailable, promote the increase of our  
wealth—for our well being."

Here the Deity is Pushan

The qualifying adjectives are, some of them, the  
same as applied to Savita स्वस्ति (literally 'what is  
good - सु ) means 'spiritual well being

(106)

## The Noble Lady.

आ घा योषेव मुनयुषा याति प्रभुञ्जती ।

जरयन्ती वृजनं पद्ददीवत उस्तातयति पक्षिणः ॥ क. ११४८।५

"Like a noble lady Ushas comes tending every-  
thing carefully,

Rousing all life she stirs every footed creature  
and makes the birds fly."

Note the word, मुनरी, a noble or good lady, applies  
to Ushas. योषा is a young unmarried lady.

(107)

## The Loving Maiden

जानत्यद्दः प्रथमस्य नाम

शुका कृष्णाद् अजनिष्ट भित्तोर्चा ।

कृतस्य योषा न मित्ताति धामाऽ-

हर् अहर् निष्कृतम् आचरन्ती ॥ क. ११२३।९

"She who has knowledge of the first of days, is  
born refulgent white out of darkness;

The Maiden breaks not the law of Order by coming  
day by day to the appointed place" (to meet  
her lover)

For निष्कृतम्, compare—

निष्कृत जातिर्जाव । क. १०।३४।६

"As the loving girl comes to the appointed place"  
(to meet her lover).

(108)

## The Glorly of Beauty

न्येय तन्वा इ शशदानो

पि देवि देवम् इयक्षमाणम् ।

स्मयमाना युवतिः पुरस्ताद्

आविर् वक्षसि कृणुषि विभाते ॥ ऋ. १।१२३।१०

‘Like a maiden, in pride of beauty,

Thou goest, Goddess, to meet the God who  
longs to win Thee;

And smiling, youthful, and brightly shining,

Thou discoverest Thy bosom before him,’

(109)

## The Blessed Virgin

मुसकाद्या मातृमृष्टेव योषा—

त्वम् तन्व कृणुषि दृशे कम् ।

मद्रा त्वम् उपो वितर व्युच्छ

न तत् ते अन्या उपसो नयन्त ॥ ऋ १।१२३।११

“Lovely as a bride adorned by her mother,

Thou showest forth Thy form that all may  
see it,

Blessed art Thou, Dawn ! Shine more widely

No other Dawns have attained what thou  
attainest ”The expression, मातृमृष्टेव योषा, ‘like a bride adorned  
by her mother ’—is most graceful

(110)

### The Blissful Goddess

In the following verse the sense of the glory of light turns to a sense of grace and goodness.

कृतस्य रश्मिम् अनुपच्छमाना

भद्रं भद्रं क्रतुम् अस्मासु परि ।

उषो ना अत्र मुह्यतां बुद्ध्या-

स्मासु रोषा मपयन्तु च स्युः ॥ ऋ १।१२२।१३

"Obedient to the reign of Eternal Order,

Give us each thought that is more and more  
blissful

Shine on us, Dawn! easy to be invoked

May we and the men in power have Thy bounty."

(111)

### Welcome of Songs

The vision of Dawn creates new types of beautiful poetic imagery, each combining in it ideas of light, loveliness and divine purity

शुतगमान् वृक्षान् श्वेतम्

श्रुताग्नीम् अरुणम् विभातान् ।

देवीम् उपरु स्वर् आवदन्ती

प्रति विमोक्षो मणिभिर् जरन्ते ॥ ऋ १।८०।१

"Pright on her path, sublime, by Law true to  
Eternal Order, red-tinted, fire-shining .

Ushas, Goddess, bringer of light

--Her the poets welcome with the singing of their  
hymns "

*Beauty Bright with Bathing*

एषा शुभ्रा न तन्वो विदानो-  
 ध्वेय स्नाती दृश्ये नो अस्थात् ।  
 अप द्वेपो बाधमाना तमास्यु-  
 या दिवो दुदित ज्योतिषागात् ॥ ऋ. ५।८।५

"She, as if conscious that her limbs are bright with bathing, stands, as it were, erect, so that we may see her ,

Having driven away malignity and darkness,  
 Ushas, Daughter of the sky, has come with light '

The first two lines are statuesque. The erect figure of the Goddess of perfect beauty, bright with bathing, stands before our mental vision.

Malignity and darkness are bracketed together and opposed by light. Thus moral ideas are symbolised by the physical.

The verse also clearly implies that what is beautiful is good, "and opposed to evil. This is a fundamental point in Vedic ideology. It combines poetry and religion.

(113)

**The Modest Maiden**

एषा प्रतीची दुहिता दिवो नृन्

योगेव भद्रा नि रिणीते अप्सः।

व्यूर्ध्वती शशुषे वार्याणि

पुनर् ज्योतिर् युवतिः पूर्वयाकः ॥ ऋ. ५।८।६

"She, Daughter of the sky, like a virtuous virgin,  
bends, opposite to men, her forehead downwards.  
Disclosing boons to the worshipper, the Maiden  
has brought again the light as before."

Extremely graceful is the description of the gentle  
downward movement of her head by a virtuous virgin,  
when she is face to face with men. The verse refers  
to the ideal of feminine modesty

(114)

**Like a Dancer**

अधि पशामि यते नृनृवा-

पोर्णुते बध उसव बर्जहम् ।

ज्योतिर् विश्रमे भुवनाय कृण्वती

मावा न व्रज व्यु र पा आवत् तमः ॥ ऋ. १।९।४

"She, like a dancer, entobes herself with her  
embroidered garments;  
She bares her bosom as the cow yields her udder.  
Creating light for all the world of life,  
Ushas has laid open the darkness as cows their  
stalls."



(115)

**The Goddess advancing amid Ten Arms**

इय या नोऽप्यर्किर्णी रूपा रोहिण्या कृता ।

चित्रेय प्रत्यदर्शयित्य १ न्तार् दशभु बाहुषु ॥

ऋ. ८।१०।११३

"She yonder, bending down, rich in rays, clothed  
in red hues ;

Is seen, advancing as one wonderful, amid the ten  
surrounding arms "

We are reminded by this verse of the ten armed  
( दशभुजा ) Goddess worshipped in modern Bengal.  
The origin of the Puranic conception of Durga evidently  
lies in the Veda. In the Veda the 'ten arms' have the  
original abstract significance of 'ten directions.'

(116)

**Dawn in Days to come**

इयुष्टे ये पूर्वतराम् अपश्यन्

व्युच्छन्तीम् उपस मत्वांसः ।

अस्माभिरु नु प्रतिचक्ष्याभूदो

ते यन्ति ये अपरीयु पश्यान् ॥ ऋ १।१३।११

"Gone are those mortals who beheld the beaming  
Dawn in former ages,

We, now behold her brightness,  
and they are coming who will see her in times  
to come."

Here the response to the glory of Dawn unites the  
past, present and future generations of men.

(117)

**The All-pervading Being**

हसः शुचिपद् वसुन्तरिक्षसद्  
 होता वेदिपद् अतिथिर् दुरोणसद् ।  
 गृपद् वरसद् ऋतसद् व्योमसद्

अ-जा गोजा ऋतजा अदिजा ऋतम् ॥ ऋ. ४।४०।५

य. वा. १०।२४, १२।१४

“ He is the Swan seated in the midst of light ; the Lord of wealth seated in the mid-region :

the Priest seated by the altar, the Guest seated at the house ;

The Dweller among men, the Dweller in the noblest place, the Dweller in Truth, the Dweller in the infinite sky ,

born of water, born of light, born of truth, born of the mountain, He is the Eternal Law.”

The Deity in this verse is Dadhikrāvan (दधिक्रावन्) or Surya ( सूर्य ).

The beginning of the verse may suggest a material phenomenon, the sun surrounded by bright light. But soon it becomes apparent that the swan ( हस ) is a symbolic term, signifying the Ultimate Being ; and the idea expressed is that of the all pervasiveness of the Divinity. He is in the light of the heavens and of the mid region ; He is at the altar on the earth , He is the honoured Guest in the homes of men. He is in men, in

the best of places, in the infinite sky : He is within water, within the mountain. Finally the idea goes from the concrete to the abstract : He is in truth : He is the Truth—the Eternal Order.

This association of the concrete and the abstract, the material and the spiritual, is typical of Vedic poetry and belongs to the religious outlook described as विभूति-योग, the path of Splendour.

[ It will be found here how wrong it is of those who say that the Vedas worship natural objects like the sun. When the sun is described as "truth-born" and "the truth," no doubt is left as to the meaning that is finally attached to the conception of the Deity. Here neither 'the sun' nor, for that matter, 'the swan, ( हंस ), is to be taken literally. The ideas are symbolical, and signify the Ultimate Reality ]

The verse is quoted in *Katha Upanishad* ( V. 1 ) to describe the supreme qualities of Atman

(118)

### The People's Light

अग्ने केतुर् विद्याम् आसि

मेष्टुः श्रेष्ठ उपस्थसत् ।

योधा स्तोत्रे वयो दधत् ॥ ऋ १०।१५६।५

"Thou, God, art the people's light;

dearest, best, seated near ;

Enlighten the singer, give him life."

Here the Deity is Agni. The superlatives—  
'dearest' and 'best'—are very significant.

(119)

### The Wonderful One

स चित्र चित्र चितयन्तम् अस्मे

चित्रभन्न चित्रतम वयोधाम् ।

चन्द्र रश्मिं पुरुषीरं बृहन्त

चन्द्र चन्द्राभिर् गृणते युवस्व ॥ ऋ. ६।६।७

" O wondrous One ! of wondrous power !

O Lord of wonders ! give us what is most wonder-  
ful, life giving,

O Bright One ! with Thy brightness, give to Thy  
singer great wealth, brilliant, with many heroes "

[ The Deity is Agni ] Here Divine effulgence and  
its wonder are contemplated with a poetic thrill

(120)

### The Supreme Light

शुच ज्योतिर्निर्दिष्ट दृश्ये क

मनो जविष्ठ पतयत्स्वन्तः ।

विभे देवाः समनसः संकेता

एकं क्रतुम् अभि वि यन्ति सधु ॥ ऋ. ६।१।९

" A steady Light, swifter than thought, is stationed  
among moving things to show the way.

All the shining Ones, being of one mind and like  
wisdom, proceed reverently towards the One  
Intelligence."

Here the Divine Presence is understood in terms of light and intelligence [ The Deity is *Vaishvanara Agni* ]. Powers, cosmic and mental, move towards it. It is steady (ध्रुव) in the midst of moving things (पतत्सु).

क्रतु implies the second of the three aspects of the Divinity, सच्चिदानन्द; it is synonymous with चित्.

(121)

He lights up Darkness

अयं रोचयद् अरुचो रुचानो ३

एव वासयद् व्यृ १ तेन पूर्वा. ।

अयम् देवत ऋतयुग्मिर् अश्वैः

स्वर्विदा नाभिना चर्षणिप्रा ॥ ऋ ६।३१।४

"He, shining, caused to shine what shone not.

By Law he lighted up the dawns

He moves with steeds yoked by eternal order,

Making men happy by the chariot-have that  
finds the sunlight "

[ The Deity is Indra ]

(122)

The Ageless

न य जरन्ति शरदो न मासा

न याव हन्द्रम् अवकर्शयन्ति ।

इदस्य चिद् वर्धताम् अस्य तनूः

स्तोमेभिर् उक्थैश्च शस्यमाना ॥ ऋ ६।२४।७

"Years do not age him, nor months nor days wear out Indra;

May his self grow, though ever so mighty,  
glorified by songs of praise and hymns of prayer."

The sense of the first part of the verse is the same as expressed by the words "अजर" (ageless) and "युवा" (youthful), but it is expressed in the particularised manner, characteristic of poetry. The worshipper thinks his songs of praise will increase the greatness of God—an idea typical of the attitude of *bhakti*.

(123)

### The Bright One

यद् याव इन्द्र ते शत

शत भूमौ उत स्युः ।

न स्वा वज्रिन्महस्र सुयो अत्रु

न जातमष्ट रोदसी ॥ ऋ ८।७।५,

साम. २७८, ८६२; अ. २०।८।११, १२।२०

"If Indra! a hundred heavens were Thine,  
and even a hundred earths,—

No, not even a thousand suns, O Thunderer,  
could match Thy Being  
nor both the worlds"

Here the Divine glory is described. Compare the  
*Bhagavad Gita*

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवद् युगपदुत्पिता ।

यदि भाः सदृशी मा स्याद् भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥ भ. गी. ११।१२

"If there could be the splendour of a thousand  
suns arisen at once in the sky,

Such would be the glory of that Magnificent Being'.

(124)

### The One Lord

समेत विश्वा वचसा पतिं दिव

एको विमुर् अतिथिर् जनानाम् ।

स पूर्वा नूतनम् आचिवासत्

त वर्तेनिर् अनु वावृत एकम् इत् पुर ॥ अ. ७।२।११

'Come together, ye all, with words (of prayer) to  
the Lord of Heaven

Who is One, the Lord, the Guest of the people;

He, the Ancient, pervades the new,

To Him, the One Alone, the many paths are  
turned'

This verse also occurs in *Sama veda*. (See No. 3).

The Sama-veda speaks of वचस्, 'spiritual vigour',

which men should bring to their worship; the Atharvan

of वचस्, 'words of prayer'.

(125)

### His Mainfold Splendour

ब्रह्मा देवाना पदवीः बवीनाम्

ऋषिर्विप्राणा मादिषो मृगाणाम्

श्येनो गृध्राणा स्वर्धतिर्वनाना

सोमः पवित्रम् अत्यति रेभन् ॥ ऋ १।१६।६

"This obeisance is spoken for the Mighty One, the  
 self resplendent,  
 for Him whose power is truth, for the strong One,  
 In this battle, O God I may all the heroes,  
 with the princes, be under Thy protection."  
 [ The Deity is Indra ].

Here Indra is described as *Vrishava*, the Mighty One [ In later religious literature the word was taken in the non metaphorical way, meaning the bull, and the bull came to occupy a place of worship. In the South *Vasava*, Prakrit for *Vrishava*, is the Bull God Compare with *Vrishava* ( वृषभ ), literally, bull the description of the Deity, as *Mesha* ( मेष ) in Rig I 5 15 which is used in the abstract sense to imply power, not in the concrete sense of 'a ram'.

Similarly in the following verse, the Deity has been called a 'Varaha' ( वराह ) literally, 'wild boar.'

दिवा वराहम् अरुण वपार्दिन  
 त्वय रूप नमसा नि ह्रियामहे । ऋ. १।११४।५

'We invoke with our obeisance  
 the Mighty One of the sky, red, with conch like  
 hair, the dazzling shape'

Perhaps this is at the root of the conception of the Divine incarnation of *Varāha* ( the boar ). But the Veda uses the term in the abstract to mean the fury of Rudra suggested by a violent storm ]



(128)

**God's Many Aspects**

मन्ये त्वा यशियं यशियाना  
 मन्ये त्वा च्यवनम् अच्युतानाम् ।  
 मन्ये त्वा सत्त्वनाम् इन्द्र केतु  
 मन्ये त्वा वृषभ चर्षणीनाम् ॥

ऋ. ८।१६।४

'I deem Thee as the Holiest of the holy,  
 I deem Thee as the Shaker of the unshaken;  
 I deem Thee, O God ! as the Banner of heroes,  
 I deem Thee as the Chief of the people.'  
 [ The Deity is Indra ]

Here the holiness, power, valour and supremacy of God are described in highly poetic language. The repeated, " I deem Thee " ( मन्ये त्वा ) creates a fine oratorical effect

(129)

**The Model of the World**

यस्मान्न ऋते विजयन्ते जनासो  
 य युष्यमाना अयसे इवन्ते ।  
 यो विश्वस्य प्रतिमान बभूव  
 यो अब्युत्तव्युत् स जनास इन्द्रः ॥

ऋ. २।१२।९

'He, without whom men never conquer,  
Whom, while fighting in battle, they invoke for  
succour :

He, who is the Model of all this world,  
Who is the Shaker of the unshaken, He, O men,  
is Indra.'

Here the central principle of Vibhuti-Yoga is stated  
या विश्वस्य प्रतिमानं बभूव—

that the universe reflects divine splendour, it is a copy  
of God

Cf. Mundakopanishad :

तस्यैव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं  
तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति । मुण्डक. १०।४२

'All shine after His shining,  
By His splendour all the world is splendid.'

(130)

### The Dancer

ध्रिये ते पादा दुव आ मिमिक्षुर्  
धृष्णुर् वज्री शवसा दक्षिणावान् ।  
वसानो अत्क सुरभि इशे क  
स्वर्णं नृताविपरो बभूथ ॥ क. ६।२९।३

'For glory Thy devotees embrace Thy Feet.  
Bold, thunder armed, gracious through Thy might,  
Clad in a vesture, beautiful as heaven to look on,  
Thou hast been as an active dancer.'

The word Shree ( श्री ) has carried a sense of divine glory and bliss through thousands of years.

Here God is called a Dāncer. Dancing is the beauty of movement—the rhythm of life

*In later times, the figure of dancing Shiva has been much admired. The different sects took the Vedic ideas, particularly those associated with Indra. In the verse quoted above, we have the origin of the idea of the Divinity as Dancer. Also compare :*

य. पूर्व्याम् अनुष्टुतिम् ईशे कृष्टाना नृतुः ॥ ऋ. ८।६।७

‘ Who was Lord of ancient praise-song, of tribes of men, the Dancer ’

Also cf Rig II 22 4, VIII 92 3

In Rig I 92 4, Ushas has been described as नृतु — dancer, so have Asvins in Rig VI 63 5

(131)

**Bringer of Lovely Water**

प्राप्नुया नमन्वाश्न वक्त्रा

ध्वस्ता अपिन्वद् युवतीर् अतशा ।

धन्वान्यद्वा अपृणक् नृपाणां

अधोग् इन्द्र. स्तयोश्च दसुपत्नीः ॥ ऋ. ४।१९।७

‘ Indra let the young virgins skilled in Law,  
as fountains, bubbling, flow streaming forward  
He flooded with water the deserts and thirsty plains,  
and milked the dry cows who had a mighty master.’

The divine action described here refers to the glory of the breaking of rains after summer. 'The young virgins', referring to streamlets, is a graceful metaphor. Here we find the initial stage of the poetic analogy which in later times developed into the mythology of water-nymphs through a detailed allegory. The law (ऋत) is the Law of Universal Order, here the law of nature. 'Milk the cows' implies the streaming of water from clouds. The mighty master is Vritra, the enemy of light, of goodness, of order, who prevented the working of the Law and the breaking of rains.

(132)

### The Source of Beauty

य पुष्पिणाश्च प्रसूश्च धमणा

ऽधि दाने व्यश्वनीरधारय ।

यश्चासमा जज्ञना दिशुतो दिव

ऊर्ध्वो अभित सास्युक्थ्य ॥ ऋ २।१३।७

'Thou who by Eternal Law hast spread about  
flowering and seed bearing plants, and streams  
of water,

Thou who hast generated the matchless lighten-  
ings in the sky,—

Thou, vast, encompassing vast realms, art a fit  
subject for our song

The word धर्मन् is cognate with "dharma" (धर्म) which has been widely used in Indian religious literature. It is Eternal Law. It is an attribute of God that He maintains Eternal Law. He does not exercise a whimsical or arbitrary will.

The Eternal Law ( धर्म ) manifests itself in nature, making its beauty and glory. In its application to life, धर्म or Eternal law makes virtuous conduct—goodness. Hence the beautiful and the good are but two aspects of धर्म—Law, cosmic and moral. Cosmic lawlessness is chaos, and moral lawlessness evil.

[ The Deity is Indra. ]

(133)

### The Revelation

प्र सु स्तोम भरत वाजयन्त

इन्द्राय मत्स्य यदि सत्यमस्ति ।

नेन्द्रे अस्तांति नेम उ त्व आह

क इ ददशे कम् अभि एवाम् ॥१॥

अयम् अस्मि जरितः पश्य मेह

विश्वा जातान्यभ्यस्मि मह्ना ।

ऋतस्य मा प्रदिशो वर्धयन्त्वा-

दर्दिरो भुवना दर्दरीमि ॥४॥ ऋ. ८।१००

' Desiring strength, bring forward a hymn of praise,  
a truthful hymn to Indra, if, truly, He exists,

" There is no Indra," one and another said,

" who has seen Him? Whom, then, shall we adore?"

" I exist, O singer ! look upon Me here ; "

all that exists I surpasss in splendour.

The Eternal Law's commandments make me mighty ;  
when I rend, I rend asunder the worlds "

The Divinity manifests Itself through splendour and through Law. This revelation is different from the revelations described in later religions, according to which some physical body appears before a man. Here the singer does not see a person or perceive a physical object, he realises within him that he can see God where he stands—through His splendour, as manifested in the universe, and through His Law which works in nature and life.

The sage's realisation implies that ' God is here or nowhere '

' Rending ' implies the might of Divine Law.

Mark the spirit of scepticism preceding the mastery of truth. It is only in very highly refined society that the spirit of doubt and query plays an important part in life. There people are not led by blind faith.

' If truly, Indra exists '—indicates a robust mind refusing to accept an idea without personal realisation.

' Who has seen Him ? ' ( क ई ददृशे ) implies that nobody has seen Him with eyes. ' Look upon me here ( पश्य मेह ) indicates that a different kind of ' seeing ' is meant—the seeing with the spirit,—the spiritual vision.

नेन्द्र अस्ति—Indra does not exist—means not that a particular deity called Indra does not exist, but that God does not exist. Had Indra meant a particular deity, then the worshipper would have rejected Indra for some other Deity—say, Agni or Varuna or Savita—as it is done in polytheism. But it is clearly meant here that the non existence of Indra is not the non-existence of one of many deities, but of Divinity Itself. It is evident therefore that Indra is one of the many names of the Divinity and not the name of a particular deity. Similarly when the sage says to Indra—न त्वावौ अन्यो अमृत त्वदस्ति (ऋ. ६।२।१।१०) 'There is no one like You beside Yourself, O Immortal' he refers not to a particular deity, but to God. This implies very clearly that the Vedic religion is not polytheistic. It contemplates One God.

(134)

### The Awful

The following verse represents God the awful

आवा चिद् अस्मै पृथिवी नमते

शुष्माचिदस्य पर्वता भयन्ते ।

यः सोमपा निचितो वज्रबाहुर्

यो वज्रदस्तः स जनास इन्द्रः ॥

ऋ २।१२।१३

' Heaven and earth bow before Him;  
 before His might the mountains tremble,  
 He, armed with the thunder bolt, deemed by us  
 as the Receiver of the soma libation,  
 He, the thunder wielder—O men, is Indra '

(135)

### The Creator of Beautiful Forms

यो धर्ता भुवनानां

यो उखाणाम् अपोऽन्या ३ वद नामानि गुह्य ।

स कवि, काव्या पुरु रूप यैरिव पुष्यति ॥ ऋ. ८।४१।५

"He who is the supporter of the worlds of life,  
 Who knows the secret, mysterious names of the  
 morning beams, .

He, Poet, cherishes manifold forms by his poetic  
 power, even as heaven,

The verse is followed by a refrain used elsewhere  
 too—

नभन्ताम् अन्यके समे

( May all others vanish )

[ The Deity is Varuna ].

One of the divine attributes is to know the light.  
 ( hence the term स्वर्विद् is applied to the Divine ) which  
 represents the principle of knowledge, goodness, beauty  
 order etc Here the symbolic nature of light is indicated  
 by the expression 'secret mysterious names of beams  
 of light'.



The Description of God as a Poet ( कवि ) and His creative energy as poetic power ( काव्य ) is typically Vedic and indicates the poetic approach to the Divine. Manifest form ( पुरुरूप ) indicates the forms of beauty and splendour. द्यौरिव—like the heaven or sky—seems to refer to the changes in the colour and form of clouds in the sky.

(136)

### The Herdsman

अपश्यं गोपाम् अनिपद्यमानम्  
 आ च परा च पथिभिः चरन्तम्  
 स सध्रीचीः स विदूचीर् वसान  
 आ वरीवर्ति भुवनेष्वन्तः ॥

ऋ. १।१६४।३१, ऋ. १०।१७७।३

'I saw the Herdsman, who never rests, who moves forward and backward over the earth,  
 He, wearing splendour that gathers together and spreads out, travels constantly within the worlds'

The Deity is "Māyābheda", "the seeing through maya or creation"—the vision of the Divinity in creation. The physical idea suggested by the 'Herdsman' is that of the sun. But the tone of the verse is mystical. It refers to the Light of Lights beyond darkness.

The term "Herdsman" came to be applied to the Divinity or the Divine Person in later religious literature.

Krishna was a 'Gopa' (गोप) corresponding to the Vedic 'Gopā' (गोपा). In Christian literature the Divine Person is described as a shepherd (Pastor).

(137)

**Worshipped in All Ages**

इद् आ हि ते वेदिपतः पुराजाः

प्रत्नास आसुः पुरुकृत् सखायः ।

ये मध्यमास उत नूतनास .

उतावमस्य पुरुकृत् बोधि ॥ ऋ. ६।२।१५

'Yea, here have been those worshipping thee, who  
were born in old times,

Thy ancient friends, O active Achiever of many  
deeds,

And Thy friends of the middle ages and of  
modern times.

'Bethink Thee now, O invoked of many, of the  
youngest (friend)'.

The terms प्रत्न, मध्यम and नूतन exactly correspond  
to 'ancient', 'medieval' and 'modern'.

[ The Deity is Indra ]

(138)

**The Guardian of Eternal Law.**

The idea of the Herdsman is found in another  
conception of the Divinity.

त्रीणि पदा वि चक्रमे

विष्णुर् गोपा अदाम्यः

अतो धर्माणि धारयन् ॥ ऋ. १।२।१८

‘ He made three steps—

Vishnu, the Herdsman, the undecivable,

Upholding, thenceforth, the eternal statutes.’

गोपा, herdsman, means the Guardian, the Protector of the universe

God upholds ‘ the eternal statutes ’ ( धर्मन् ). The conception of Divinity includes the fundamental principle of eternal law, moral and cosmic, or *Rita* (ऋत), Eternal Order. According to the Veda, God is God because He upholds the eternal law. This implies two things—first, we cannot imagine a God whose will is arbitrary and who can do good or evil according to His wish—secondly, it is possible to adhere to *dharma*, eternal law, without even attaching oneself to the divine idea. [ The latter view was advocated by Gotama Buddha. It is no wonder, firstly, that people worshipping Vishnu should be persuaded to attach themselves to *dharma* and not think of the Deity, in other words to become Buddhists, and secondly, that people who were attached to Dharma alone (Buddhists) should come to accept the Divinity too and become ‘ Vaishnavas and followers of the Vedic religion. The

transition, therefore, from the Vedic religion to Buddhism first, and later from Buddhism back to the Vedic religion was a simple, logical process, because the Vedic conception included both the Divine idea and the idea of *dharma* }

(139)

Source of Sweetness

यस्य त्री पूर्णा मधुना पदानि

अक्षीयमाणा स्वधया मधन्ति ।

य उ त्रिधातु पृथिवीम् उत द्याम्

एको दाधार भुवनानि विश्वा ॥ ऋ. १।१५।४

" [ Let the hymn lift itself to ]

Vishnu whose three places are filled with  
sweetness,

imperishable places that joy with holy bliss;

Vishnu the One, who upholds the three fold—the  
earth, the sky and the worlds of living creatures."

The ideas of sweetness of peace and joy have been associated with the conception of the Divinity as Vishnu in all later religious literature. The Vaishnava cult distinguishes itself by the contemplation of these qualities.

When every God is described as "the One" in the Veda, it is clear that different divinities are but different aspects of the One Divine Being.

(140)

King and President

विशा राजानम् अद्भुतम्

अभ्यक्ष धर्मेणम् इमम् ।

अग्निम् ईळे स उ भवत् ॥ ऋ. ८।४३।२४

"To the King of men, the wonderful,  
the President of Eternal Laws,  
to the Effulgent One, I pray; may He listen to it."

Here the Deity is described both as King and as President, implying respectively the Monarch and the Presiding or Overseeing Power (अभ्यक्ष).

(141)

The King

महौ असि महिष वृष्णेभिर्

धनस्पद् उग्र सहमानो अन्यान् ।

एको विश्वस्य भुवनस्य राजा

स योधया च क्षयया च जनान् ॥ ऋ. ३।४६।२

'Great art Thou, Mighty Lord, through valour  
obtaining wealth, O fierce One, conquering others  
Thyself alone the King of the whole universe,  
Such as Thou art, Thou causest battle and  
Thou peace.'

Here the Deity is conceived on the analogy of the martial earthly monarch. Compare also—

य एको अस्ति दयना

महो उग्रो जमि त्रै. । ऋ. ८।१।२७

'He who alone by his exp endours is mighty, who  
is awful by eternal laws'

Compare also—

वरिषस्य महामह— ऋ. ८।४६।१०

'Be gracious, O Greatest of the great'

(142)

**The Emperor**

अग्निः प्रियेषु धामसु

कामो भूतस्य भग्नस्य

सन्नाडेको विराजति ॥ साम. १७।१०

८।२।१९

'Agni in his beloved forms,

Love of what has been and what will be,

Shines, the sole Emperor.'

Here the Deity is described as the Emperor, an  
idea frequently found in Semitic religions

(143)

**All Power is His**

उत् त्वं मघवन्नृणु

मस्ते वटि यवक्षि तत् ।

यद् वीळ्यासि वीळु तत् ॥ ऋ. ८।४५।६

"And, O mighty Lord! hear!

Thou givest to him who asks of thee.

Whatever Thou makest firm is firm "

[The Deity is Indra] Here the idea is about the same as is found in Semitic religions of an all powerful God whose will makes men what they are and who, out of His grace, gives to those who ask

(144)

### The Terrible Chastiser

The following idea of a Terrible Chastiser is also in keeping with the Semitic conception of God:

विभया हि त्वावत

उमाद् अभिप्रमङ्गिणः ।

दस्माद् अहम् ऋतीषदः ॥ ऋ. ८।४५।३५

I am afraid of One like thee,  
the mighty Crusher (of the wicked),  
the Powerful, the Conqueror of all.

[The Deity is Indra]

(145)

### The Forgiver of Sins

मा न एकस्मिन्नागधि

मा द्वयोर् उत त्रिषु

वधीर् मा शूर भूरिषु ॥ ऋ. ८।४५।३४

'Not for one sin nor for two, nor three,  
O Hero! destroy me; nor yet for many sins'  
[ The Deity is Indra ]

The prayer for the forgiveness of sins is typical of later forms of religion. The typical Vedic spirit is to approach the all-good through goodness, the all-powerful through power, the all pure through purity

(146)

### God's Emissaries

The idea of sin is particularly associated with the conception of Varuna whose emissaries detect all the transgresses of man

परि स्पशो वरुणस्य सदिष्टा

उभे पश्यन्ति रोदसी मुमेके ।

ऋतावान्, वयसो यज्ञधीराः,

प्रचेतसो य इष्यन्त मन्म ॥ ऋ. ७/८७/३

'The emissaries of Varuna, sent on their errand, survey both the worlds, that are well formed, upholders of eternal Law, wise, holy,— they further the praise songs of the noble-minded '

(147)

### Creator of Splendid Things

वनेषु व्य १ न्तरिथ ततान्

बाजम् अर्वात्सु पय उखियासु ।

हस्तु ऋतु वरुणो अप्सव १ मि

दिवि सूर्यम् अदधात् सोममद्वी ॥ ऋ. ५/८५/२



'Varuna has spread the vista in forests,  
 put vigour in horses, milk in kine,  
 set wise instincts in hearts, fire in the waters,  
 the sun in heaven and soma on the mountain.'

Here both the physical and the mental aspects of the universe are referred to

[ The first line has been translated after Sayana as—"Varuna has extended the air in tree tops", which does not appear satisfactory, अन्तरिक्ष, like 'vigour in horses, milk in kine' etc, is something within the forests ( वनेषु ). ]

(148)

### The Brightener of Minds

महो अर्ण सरस्वती

प्र चेतयति कतुना

धियो विश्वा वि राजति ॥ ऋ १।३।१२

' Saraswati the mighty ocean ( of light )

illuminates with her light

She brightens all intellects

Saraswati is the Deity conceived as the inspirer of thought and knowledge. Light is the usual Vedic symbol for knowledge. In many verses धी ( intelligence ) is associated with Saraswati.

य सरस्वती सह धीभिस्तु ॥ ऋ. ७।३।११

'M. १. ३. ११. wati, with १. १. thoughts be gracious'

(149)

**The Inspirer**

प्र णो दवा सरस्वती

वाजेभिर् वाजिनीवती

धीनाम् अवित्यवतु ॥ ऋ. ६।६।१८

' May the divine Saraswati,

rich in power,

Inspire our minds and protect us '

(150)

**The Purifier**

पावका नः सरस्वती

गजेभिर् वाजिनीवती

यज्ञ वष्टु धियायमुः ॥ ऋ. १।३।१०

' May Saraswati, the purifier,

rich in power,

with intellects as her treasure,

Desire our sacrifice

(151)

**Rouser of the true and the Good**

चोदयित्री मुवृत्तानां

चेतन्ती सुमतीना ।

यज्ञ दधे सरस्वती ॥ ऋ. १।३।११

' Inspirer of the truthful,

rouser of the good minded,

Saraswati accepts the offering '

*The spiritual inspiration comes only to the true and good. One who seeks higher knowledge must live a noble life*

(152)

## Giver of Renown

The etymological sense of the word 'Saraswati' is 'Lady of the lake' (सरस् + वती). The idea of a stream often goes to the conception of the Deity, though the association with the higher life of intellect remains unchanged

अम्बितमे नदीतमे  
देवितमे सरस्वति ।  
अग्रशस्ता इव स्मसि  
प्रशस्तिम् अम्ब नस्कृधि ॥

श्रु. २/४१/१६

'Motherliest of mothers, noblest of rivers,  
Godliest of Goddesses' O Saraswati  
we are as of no repute  
Mother, give us high renown'

Though it is a prayer to the noblest of rivers, it is  
a prayer for intellectual achievement —high renown

(153)

## The Mother

प्रति मे स्तामम् अदितिं नयूयताम्  
मृतुं न माता ह्यसुखम् ।

श्रु. -१/४२/२

(149)

**The Inspirer**

प्र णो देवा सरस्वती

वाजेभिर् वाजिनीवती

धीनाम् अविम्वतु ॥ ऋ. ६।६।१८

' May the divine Saraswati,

rich in power,

Inspire our minds and protect us '

(150)

**The Purifier**

पावका नः सरस्वती

वाजेभिर् वाजिनीवती

यज्ञ वष्टु धियायमुः ॥ ऋ. १।३।१०

May Saraswati, the purifier,

rich in power,

with intellects as her treasure,

Desire our sacrifice

(151)

**Rouser of the true and the Good**

चोदयिषी मुमुक्षुना

चैतन्ती मुमतीना ।

यज्ञ दधे सरस्वती ॥ ऋ. १।३।११

' Inspirer of the truthful,

rouser of the good minded

Saraswati accepts the offering '

The spiritual inspiration comes only to the true and good. One who seeks higher knowledge must live a noble life

(152)

*Giver of Renown*

The etymological sense of the word 'Saraswati' is 'Lady of the lake' (सरस् + वती). The idea of a stream often goes to the conception of the Deity, though the association with the higher life of intellect remains unchanged

अम्बितमे नदीतमे  
देवितमे सरस्वति ।  
अप्रशस्ता इव स्मसि  
प्रशस्तिम् अम्ब नस्कृषि ॥

अ. २।४१।१६

'Motherliest of mothers, noblest of rivers,  
Godliest of Goddesses' O Saraswati

we are as of no repute

Mother, give us high renown'

Though it is a prayer to the noblest of rivers, it is  
a prayer for intellectual achievement,—high renown.

(153)

*The Mother*

प्रणि मे स्वामम् अदितिं जगृभ्नात्  
मनु न माता ह्यस्य मुशेवम् ।

अ. ५।४२।२

'May Aditi my praise song accept,  
as a mother her dear heart gladdening son.'

(154)

### The Mighty Mother

महीम् ऊ तु मातर २ मुक्त्वानाम्  
 ऋष्य पत्नीम् अवसे ह्रुवेम ।  
 तुविद्यत्राम् अजरन्तीम् उरूर्ध्वी २  
 तुशमांणम् अदिति २ मुयसीतिम् ॥

य. २११५.

'The Mighty Mother of those whose sway is just,  
the Queen of Order,—we call on for succour:

We call on the strong Ruler, the never-decaying,  
the wide-expanding,

Aditi—the good protectress, the gracious guide'

The expression, 'Mighty Mother' implies the conception of the supreme Divinity in terms of motherhood. (This idea has been popularised in later times by Tantra).

(155)

### Motherliest Physicians

ओमानम् आसो मानुसीर् अमृकं  
 धातु लोकाय तनयाय च योः ।  
 यूयं हि द्वा मिषजो मातृवमा  
 विश्वस्य स्थातुर् जगतो जनिषीः ॥ ऋ. ६।५.०।३

'Waters! Friends of men' in peace and in trouble,  
 give your blessings to our sons and grandsons,  
 For ye are the most motherly physicians,  
 the mothers of all that stands and all that moves'

(156)

### Healing Power of Waters

The medicative powers of water that were known to Vedic Aryans have only recently been discovered by modern people. Compare

अप्सु मे सोमो अब्रवीद्  
 अन्तर्विश्वानि मेपजा ।  
 अग्निं च विश्वसभुवम्  
 आपश्च विश्वमेपजीः ॥ ऋ. १।२३।२०

'Within the waters—Soma has told me—  
 are all medicines that heal,  
 And Agni who blesses all.  
 The waters contain all medicines'

(157)

### The Divine Pair

प्रानार् यावाणा रथ्येव वीरा  
 ऽथेव यमा वरमा सचेथे ।  
 मेने इव तन्वा ३ शुभमाने  
 दम्पतीव ऋतुविदा जनेषु ॥ २

गृह्येव न प्रथमा गन्तम् नवीक  
 छफाविव जभुराणा तरोभि ।  
 चक्षुषाकेव प्रति वस्तार् उला  
 वाञ्छा पात रथेव शका ॥ ३

नायेव न पारयत युगव  
 नभ्यव न उपर्धाव प्रधीव ।  
 श्वानव नो अरिषण्या तनूना  
 वृगलेव विस्तस पातम अक्षमान् ॥ ४

वातेवायुना नद्यव रीति  
 रक्षी इव चक्षुषा यातम् अन्नाक ।  
 हस्ताविव तन्वे ३ दधाविष्टा  
 पादव नो नयत वस्या अञ्ज ॥ ५

आष्टाविव मध्वास्त्र वदन्ता  
 स्तनाविव पिप्यत त्रीवसे न ।  
 नासेव नस्तन्वो रक्षितारा  
 वणाविव बुध्रता भूतमस्य ॥ ६

उस्तेव शक्तिम् अग्नि सददो न  
 धामेव न समञ्जत रतासि ।  
 इमा गिरो अश्विना युष्मदन्वी  
 शोषणव स्वधिति स शिशीतम् ॥ ७ ॥ क. २।३९



Going in the morning, like two car borne heroes,  
 like a pair of goats, ye come electing ,  
 Like two damsels embellishing their bodies,  
 like a wise married couple among the people (2)

Like a pair of horns, come first towards us,  
 like a pair of hoofs with rapid motion ,  
 Like two chakravaks come in the grey of morning,  
 come, ye mighty! like two chariot wheels at  
 dawn (3)

Like two boats, take us across ( the river ),  
 like the naves, like the yokes, like spokes and  
 fellyes, save us ,  
 Like two dogs that injure not the body,  
 like two crutches protect us against falling. (4)

Like two winds that age not,  
 like two rivers that come to a confluence,  
 Like two eyes, come before us, with the power  
 of vision  
 Come like two hands, most helpful to the body,  
 like two feet take us towards what is good. (5)

Like two lips that with the mouth speak honey,  
 like two breasts that nourish our life,  
 Like two nostrils that preserve our body,  
 be to us, like two ears that hear well.(6)

पदे इव निहिते दक्ष्मे अन्तस्  
 तयोर् अन्यद् गुह्यम् आविर् अन्यत् ।  
 सप्रीचीना पथ्या इसा विपूची

मद्द् देवानाम् असुरत्वम् एकम् ॥ ऋ. ३।५५।१५

' Different each from the other, you Two  
 have made yourselves twin beauties;  
 one of the Twain is bright, the other dark.  
 And yet, these Two, the white and the red, are  
 sisters.

Great is the single divinity of the Gods, (11)  
 "The Two are, as it were, treasured in a wondrous  
 place :

Of the Twain one is hidden, the other manifest,  
 One common pathway is parted in two.

Great is the single divinity of the Gods (15)  
 [The subject of the verses is Day and Night.]

(160)

**Virgin Motherhood**

आक्षित् पूर्वास्वपरा अनूस्त्  
 मयो जातासु तस्मिन्मन्तः ।

अन्तर्वती सुवत अप्रवीता

मद्द् देवानाम् असुरत्वम् एकम् ॥

ऋ. ३।५५।५

' Lying in the old (plants) he grows again in  
 the younger,

quickly in the tender, newly horn ,

Though they are unimpregnated, he makes them  
fruitful,

Great is the single divinity of the Gods '

The Deity is Agni, the Divine Energy inspiring  
life

The Christian theory of virgin birth is obviously  
derived from the original conception of plant life. The  
plant, growing up in all freshness from the earth, be-  
comes fruitful. The fruit seems to have only the mother  
and no earthly father,—to have derived its life from a  
heavenly Father—the Divine Spirit that vitalises all life.

[ The Veda calls this Divine Spirit Agni—the  
Deity of the verse ]

(161)

One who stays Flowing Waters

‘ स हे मही धुनिम् एतेर् अरण्यात्

तो जस्तातुन् अपारयत्स्वीत् ।

त उत्ताय रयिम् अमि प्र तस्थु-

सोमस्य ता मद इन्द्र अकार ॥ क. २।१५।५

'The mighty roaring stream he stayed from flowing,

he carried those, who swam not safely across,

They having crossed attained to riches

That Indra did in the Soma's rapture '

We are reminded here of the Old Testament  
account of the crossing of the sea through Divine grace  
by Moses and his followers.

The next line puts us in mind of a poetic idea found in Vaishnavā songs—

सोदश्च विधुम् अरिणान् महित्वा । क. २।१५।६

'With his might he made the streams flow upward'

(162)

*For Him the Dawn is Lovely*

तुभ्यम् उपास. शुचय. परावति

भद्रा बला तन्वते दसु रदिमपु

चित्रा नव्येषु रदिमपु ।

तुभ्य धेनु सवदुंघा विश्वा वसुनि दोहते ।

अजनयो मस्तो वक्षणाभ्यो दिव आ वक्षणाभ्यः ॥

१

क. २।१३।४

'For Thee the radiant Dawns in the far off sky  
spread out their lovely garments in wondrous  
beams,

splendid in their new born beams,

For Thee the nectar yielding cow yields all  
treasures,

The Maruts thou hast engendered from the wombs,  
the heaven's wombs

[ Here the Deity is Vayu the Lord of the sky ]

The metre is very graceful

## The Beautiful Troop

विप्रासो न मन्माभिः स्वाध्वो  
 देवाव्यो न यज्ञैः स्वप्रसः ।  
 राजानो न चित्राः सुसंहसः  
 धितीनां न मर्या अरेपसः ॥१  
 प्रावाणो न सूर्यः सिन्धुमातर  
 आदर्शिरसो अद्रयो न विश्वर्हा ।  
 शिशूला न श्रीलयाः सुमातरो  
 महाप्राप्तो न वामन्तुत त्विपा ॥६ क १०/७८

'Ye by your hymns are like noble minded sages,  
 skilful, inviting Gods as by sacrifice,

Wonderous looking like kings decked in splendour,  
 like sinless gallants, leaders of people.

Princes born of the stream, like press stones,

Like crushing stones that crush all ;

Playful like children that have beauteous mothers,

Like a great host marching with splendour.'

[ The Deities are Maruts. ]

The simile in the seventh line brings a graceful picture  
 of family life before the mind's eye.

## Social Courtesy

“ओ पु स्वसारः कारवे दृष्टोऽन  
ययो वो दूराद् अनसा रथेन ।  
निपू नमध्व भवता नुगारा  
जधोअथाः सिन्धवः स्त्रोत्याभिः ॥”  
“आ ते कारो दृष्टावामा वचासि  
ययाम दूराद् अनसा रथेन ।  
नि ते नर्य पीप्यानेव योषा  
मर्यायेव वन्या दश्वचै ते ॥”

ऋ. ३।३।१९-१०

*The Sage's address to two Rivers*

“Sisters I listen to the poet  
who has come to you with wagon and car,  
Bow lowly down, be easy to cross,  
Rivers, with your streams bend  
the axles.”

*One of the Rivers replies*

“Yes, singer, we will listen to thy words,  
because thou comest from far with  
wagon and car  
I will bend to thee like a nursing mother,  
I will yield to thee as a maiden to her lover”

These two stanzas are taken out of a beautiful ballad of thirteen stanzas ( Rig. III. 33. )

Note the courteous manner of address by a man to members of the opposite sex—'sisters' (स्वसराः). This courtesy has persisted in India through thousands of years

The beauty of the last two lines is superb

(165)

### Two Beautiful-winged Birds

In the following symbolic verse, the two beautiful winged Birds have been understood through the ages to refer to the relation between the soul (जीवात्मन्) and the Over soul (परमात्मन्):

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया  
समार्न वृक्षं परि पस्वजाते ।  
तयोर् अन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्तम्—  
नश्नन्नन्यो अभि चाकशीति ॥

ॐ १।१६४।२०

Two beautiful winged Birds  
flit together (by love), friends—  
have found their abode in the same tree  
One of them eats the sweet *pippala* fruit  
the other, that does not eat, overlooks all  
[ The verse has been quoted in Upanishads ]

(166)

### "The Beautiful winged"

In the following the Beautiful winged (Bird)—  
सुपर्ण—stands for the Divinity

मुपगै विप्राःकवदो वचोभिर्  
 एक सन्तं बहुधा कल्ययन्ति।  
 छन्दासि च दधतो अश्वरेषु  
 महान् सोमस्य मिमङ्गे द्वादश ॥ऋ.१०।११४।५

"The Beautiful winged, though He is one, the wise poets shape, with songs, in many figures

And while they grasp the hymns at sacrifices, they measure out twelve chalices of Soma "

The verse implies that there is One God spoken of in many ways by the sage poets and worshipped by them by the recitation of hymns and offering of soma juice at *yajnas*.

### (167) The tree with Inverted Roots.

In the following we find the symbol common in post vedic literature, of the inverted tree

अबुधे राजा वरुणो वनस्यो—  
 र्ध्वं स्तूप ददते पतदधः ।  
 नीचीनाः स्थुरपरि बुध्न ध्याम  
 असे अन्तर्निहिताःकेतवःस्युः ॥ ऋ १।२४।७

' In the baseless region, King Varuna,  
 of hallowed power, holds erect  
 the tree's stem,  
 Its rays, whose root is high above,  
 stream downward  
 Deep may they sink within us,  
 and be hidden." ~  
 cf. The Bhagavad Gita ,



ऊर्ध्वमूलम् अधःशाखम् अश्वत्थं प्राहुर् अव्ययम् ।१५।१

'They have called the Asvattha with roots above and branches below, indestructible'

(168) The Supreme Sage

सो अङ्गिरोमिर् अङ्गिरस्तमो भूद्

वृषा वृषामि सखिभिः सखा सन् ।

ऋग्मिमिर् ऋग्मी गातुमिर् ज्येष्ठो

मस्तुवान् नो भवत्विव्र ऊती ॥ ऋ.१।१००।४

'He, Indra, was the best Angiras among Angirasas, being mighty among the mighty, a friend with friends.

The chanter of verse among verse chanters, the seniormost of singers.

May Indra, at the head of Maruts, be our succour'.

According to this style of speech, the Divinity can be spoken of in the superlative degree of any term signifying goodness and nobility

(169) The Great Comforter

According to Vedic grammar the superlative suffix is joined not only to adjectives, but also to substantives. In the above we find the superlative in तुम, in the following verse, it is in इष्ट (corresponding to English est).

कया तन्मृष्ये मन्त्रा शचिष्ठो

यया कृणोति मुहु वा चिद् ऋषः ।

पुरु दाशुपे विचयिष्ठो अहो

ऽथा दधानि द्रविण जरित्रे ॥ ऋ. ४।२०।९

'By what might is He renowned as the mightiest,  
Wherewith the Lofly One makes battle?

The best Soother of the worshipper's great sorrow  
He gives riches to the singer'

Here द्युचिष्ठ, mightiest, and, विचयिष्ठ, the best soother,  
are superlative terms applied to the Divinity.

### (170) The Supreme Being

In the following verse, the opening verse of  
Rigveda, the Deity is called the supreme Donor.

आग्नेम् ईळे पुणेहित

यशस्य देवम् ऋविजम् ।

होतार रत्नधातमम् । ऋ. १।१।१

I pray to Agni, the Priest, God of the sacrifice,  
the Minister of the service

The Offerer of oblation, the best Giver of treasure.

Superlative terms applied to the Deity, indicating  
the supreme state of every value of life, are found  
scattered over the Vedas. It is important to note that  
the Deities are named differently—Agni, Indra etc.—but  
each represents the supreme quality, in other words,  
each Deity represents the supreme Being in a  
particular way

The following are some of the superlative terms

रत्नधातमः (ऋ. १।१।१)— the supreme giver of  
treasure (spoken of Agni)

वीर्यवत्तमः (ऋ. १।१।३)—the great leader of heroes  
(Agni)

पुरुषतमः पुरुषानाम् (ऋ. १।५।२)—Fullest among the fulls  
Richest of the rich (spoken of Indra)

रथीतमः रथीना (ऋ. १।११।१)—Supreme among  
car borne heroes (Indra)

यविष्ठ (ऋ. १।२६।२) Most youthful (Agni)

महिष्ठ (ऋ. १।३०।१) Most liberal (Indra)

अद्भिरस्तमः (ऋ. १।३१।२) the supreme Angira.  
(Agni)

यजिष्ठं (ऋ. १।४४।५) best adored (Agni)

वेधस्तम (ऋ. १।७५।२) the wisest (Agni)

वाजसातम (ऋ. १।७८।३) the best gainer of power  
(Agni)

वृत्रहन्तम (ऋ. १।७८।४) The Supreme Vritra slayer  
(destroyer of darkness, evil) (Agni)

सुगोपातम (ऋ. १।८६।१)—the best of guardians  
(Maruts)

जुष्टतमासो नृत्तमासः (ऋ. १।८७।१)—most beloved  
and manliest (Maruts)

मन्दिष्ठ (ऋ. १।९७।३)—best praiser (Agni)

तवस्तमा (ऋ. १।१०९।५)—mightiest (Indra Agni)

सहसा सहन्तमः (ऋ. १।१२७।९) Most victorious  
with conquering strength (Agni)

'By what might is He renowned as the mightiest,  
 Wherewith the Lofly One makes battle?  
 The best Soother of the worshipper's great sorrow  
 He gives riches to the singer'  
 Here शक्तिष्ठ, mightiest, and, विचयिष्ठ, the best soother,

are superlative terms applied to the Divinity.

### (170) The Supreme Being

In the following verse, the opening verse of *Rigveda*, the Deity is called the supreme Donor :

आग्नेम् ईळे पुणेष्टिव  
 यशस्य देवम् ऋत्विजम् ।  
 होतार रत्नधातमम् । ऋ. १।१।१

I pray to Agni, the Priest, God of the sacrifice,  
 the Minister of the service.

The Offerer of oblation, the best Giver of treasure.

Superlative terms applied to the Deity, indicating the supreme state of every value of life, are found scattered over the Vedas. It is important to note that the Deities are named differently—Agni, Indra etc.—but each represents the supreme quality, in other words, each Deity represents the supreme Being in a particular way.

The following are some of the superlative terms.

रत्नधातमः (ऋ. १।१।१)— the supreme giver of treasure (spoken of Agni)

वीरवत्तमः ( ऋ. १।१।३ )—the great leader of heroes  
( Agni )

पुष्टतमः पुरुषाम् ( ऋ. १।५।२ )—Fullest among the fulls  
Richest of the rich. ( spoken of Indra )

रथीतमः रथीना ( ऋ. १।११।१ )—Supreme among  
car-borne heroes. ( Indra )

यविष्ठ ( ऋ. १।२६।२ ) Most youthful ( Agni )

मंहिष्ठ ( ऋ. १।३०।१ ) Most liberal ( Indra )

अङ्गिरस्तमः ( ऋ. १।३१।२ ) the supreme Angira,  
( Agni )

यजिष्ठं ( ऋ. १।४४।५ ) best adored ( Agni )

वेधस्तम ( ऋ. १।७५।२ ) the wisest ( Agni )

बाजसातम ( ऋ. १।७८।३ ) the best gainer of power  
( Agni )

वृत्रहन्तम ( ऋ. १।७८।४ ) The Supreme Vritra-slayer  
( destroyer of darkness, evil ) ( Agni )

सुगोपातम ( ऋ. १।८६।१ )—the best of guardians  
( Maruts )

जुष्टतमासो नृतमासः ( ऋ. १।८७।१ )—most beloved  
and manliest ( Maruts )

मन्दिष्ठ ( ऋ. १।९७।३ )—best praiser ( Agni )

तवस्तमा ( ऋ. १।१०९।५ )—mightiest ( Indra Agni )

सहसा सहन्तमः ( ऋ. १।१२७।९ ) Most victorious  
with conquering strength ( Agni )

शुष्मिन्तमः ( ऋ. १।१२७।९ )—most mighty ( Indra )

शान्तमः ( ऋ. १।१२८।७ ) kindest, most blissful  
( Agni )

ओजिष्ठ ( ऋ. १।१२९।१० ) Strongest ( Indra )

सुश्रवस्तमः ( ऋ. १।१३३।७ ) readiest to hear ( Indra )

अपसाम् अपस्तमः ( ऋ. १।१६०।४ ) most skilful among  
the skilled ( Creator )

मेष्ठः ( ऋ. १।१६१।१ ) best ( Ribhu )

( १।२१।३ ) most excellent ( Agni )

अवृकृतमः [ ऋ. १।१७४।१० ] most gentle hearted  
( Indra )

इन्द्रतमा [ ऋ. १।१८२।२ ] — most Indra-like  
( Asvins )

मरुत्तमा [ , ] —most Marut-like ( Asvins )

दंष्टिष्ठा [ , ] —most wonderful ( , )

प्रेष्ठ [ ऋ. १।१८६।३ ] — most beloved ( Agni )

[ ६।२६।८ ] — , ( Indra )

तुविष्टमो नरं [ ऋ. १।१८६।६ ] Strongest of heroes  
( Twashta )

सुवभिष्टम नरं [ ऋ. १।१८६।७ ] Most delightful of  
Heroes. ( Twashta )

यशस्तमः [ ऋ. ६।८।१ ] The most splendid one  
( Agni )

सुता ज्येष्ठतम ( ऋ. २।१६।१ ) The best of the good  
( Indra )

तवस्तमस् तवसा ( ऋ. २।३३।३ ) Mightiest of the;  
mighty ( Rudra )

भियत्तम त्वा भियजा ( ऋ. २।३३।४ ) Best of physi-  
cians ( Rudra )

अग्नितमे नदीतमे देवितमे ( ऋ. २।४१।१६ ) Motherliest  
best of rivers, Godliest ( Saraswati )

ऋषितमः ( ऋ. ३।१४।१ ) Best of Poets ( Agni )

( ऋ. ५।८५।६ ) „ wisest ( Varuna )

नृत्तम ( ऋ. ३।१९।३ ) Most rich in men ( Agni )

„ ( ऋ. ३।३२।१७ ) „ ( Indra )

विप्रनम ( ऋ. ३।३१।७ ) The noblest singer ( Indra )

पुरुत्तम ( ऋ. ३।३९।७ ) Most zealous ( „ )

इनतमः ( ऋ. ३।४९।२ ) Most vigorous ( „ )

वर्षिष्ठम् ( ऋ. ३।५६।२ ) The Highest ( All Gods )

पितृत्तमः पितॄणाम् ( ऋ. ४।१७।१७ ) Most fatherly of  
fathers ( Indra )

नृत्तमः ( ऋ. ४।२२।२ ) Most Heroic ( Indra )

देवा देवतमः ( ऋ. ४।२२।३ ) Divinest God ( Do )

आगमिष्ठः ( ऋ. ४।४३।२ ) Most quick of movement  
( Aswins )

शमीविष्ठः ( „ ) Greatest bestower of bliss

- चेतिष्ठः ( ऋ. ५।२७।१ ) Most famous of nobles  
( Agni )
- वृत्रहन्तम ( ऋ. ५।३५।६ ) Greatest of the slayers  
of Vritra, Power of darkness ( Indra )
- „ ( ऋ. ८।७४।४ ) ( Agni )
- शविष्ठ ( ऋ. ५।३८।२ ) Mightiest ( Indra )
- दीर्घश्रुतम ( „ ) Most widely famed ( „ )
- कवितमः कवीनाम् ( ऋ. ५।४२।३ ) Sagest of the  
Sages ( Savita )
- मन्द्रतमः ( ऋ. ६।११।२ ) Most joyous ( Agni )
- वेधस्तमः ( ऋ. ६।१४।२ ) Wisest. ( Agni )
- उद्दिष्ठ ( ऋ. ६।१८।४ ) Most Potent ( Indra )
- परिष्ठ ( ऋ. ६।३७।४ ) Supreme ( Indra )
- मघोना तुविकूर्मितमः ( „ ) Most efficacious of the  
princes. ( Indra )
- वृष्ण्तमः ( ऋ. ६।५७।४ ) Most valiant ( Indra )
- नेदिष्ठम् आप्यम् ( ऋ. ७।१५।१ ) Nearest kin ( Agni )
- दीर्घश्रुतम ( ऋ. ७।८१।९ ) Most far famed ( Usha )
- मदिन्दम ( ऋ. ८।११।९ ) Best of gladdeners ( Indra )  
( ऋ. ९।१५।८ ) — ( Soma )
- शोभिष्ठ ( ऋ. ८।३।२१ ) Fairest ( Indra )
- दस्युहन्तम ( ऋ. ८।३९।८ ) Best slayer of the wicked  
( Dasyu ) — ( Agni )



beauty, splendour, wonderfulness, adorableness, poetry and music, and eminence, fame and wealth (spiritual and material)—these are some of the qualities that have been extolled, and no quality opposed to these has received appreciation.

From this we can construct the Vedic code of life—moral as well as aesthetic.

In popular polytheism gods and goddesses are good as well as bad. In Greek polytheism there are gods that are ugly, disabled and at least partly evil. In Homer, we find Hera speaking to Zeus in very uncomplimentary terms. But the Vedic gods always stand for the perfection in truth, goodness and beauty, in physical form and in the elementary qualities of energy and valour.

### (171) One Divinity Beyond All Gods

विश्वेदेवे जनिमा स विविक्तो  
महो देवान् विभ्रती न व्यथेते।  
एजद् ऋषव पत्यते विश्वम् एकम्  
चरत् पतन्नि विपुणं वि जातम् ॥

ऋ. ३।५।८

All that exists these two  
( Sky and Earth ) keep asunder ,  
though bearing the mighty  
Devas ( Gods ) they reel not,

One All is Lord of what  
 moves and what is fixed,  
 of what walks, what flies,  
 —this multi-form creation.'

The mighty Devas (Gods) are borne by sky and Earth; hence they are the splendid phenomena of Nature — in their material aspect. Beyond their splendour there is the One Divine Essence (एकम्) which is also All (विश्वम्) and which lords it over (पश्यते) the world of phenomena.

Herein lies the secret of Vibhūti-yoga. The Vedic sage views the beauty of Nature in two ways one, material, where the universe shines in splendour, another, spiritual, where he realises the presence of a Divine Power beyond the splendour.

Note the neuter form of "One"—एकम्. Compare

आनीद् अवातं स्वधया तद् एक

तस्माद्वयन् न परः किं चनास । ऋ. १०।१२९।२

'The One breathed air less by self impulse,—  
 A part from It was nothing whatsoever.'

The use of the neuter gender distinguishes the Vedic conception of One Divine Being or Essence from the usual monotheistic view of one Divine Individual, generally localised and particularised.

In the Vedas here we find the metaphysical, as distinguished from the theological, approach to the Divine Idea.

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# कर्मयोग

**THE PATH OF ACTION.**

## THE PATH OF ACTION.

The Path of Action ( कर्मयोग ) is as important, according to the Vedas, as the Path of knowledge (ज्ञानयोग). In later religious literature we find a tendency to consider action useless or at best as a necessary evil, but in the Vedas action is accepted as an essential part of life.

Karma-yoga means, primarily, the acceptance of our existence on the material plane. This leads to the building up of the body and the sharpening of the mind and to living a full life with health and vigour and in the joy of being.

Secondly, karma yoga is accepting the battle of life and fighting it with a will to victory and survival. Survival, in the Vedic sense, does not apply to mere biological existence. it applies also to moral and spiritual life. Hence the battle of life is the battle between good and evil. Calling up all that is most energetic and valiant in man to its service. Thus Karma-yoga is based on the kshatriya spirit, the heroic outlook on life.

The prayer of the Karma yogin is, therefore, a prayer for health and strength, for a perfect body and long life and for the good things of the earth. it is also a prayer for valour and power and for victory over all kinds of evil.

The God of the Karma-yogin is the ideal Hero and Warrior. The Vedic Indra is the most typical representation of this conception

### (1) Prayer for a long life

तत् चक्षुर् देवहितं शुक्रम् उच्यते ।

पश्येम शरदः शतं जीवेम शरदः शतम् ॥

ऋ० ७।६६।१६

"May we, for a hundred autumns, see that bright eye (of the sky, i.e. the sun) God ordained, arise may we live for a hundred autumns"

This is an expression of the will to life—a long radiant life. The Veda sets a hundred years as the norm of human life

### (2) Prayer for a full life

The Yajur Veda expands the idea of the verse

तत् चक्षुर् देवहितं

पुरस्ताच्छुक्रम् उच्यते ।

पश्येम शरदः शतम् जीवेम शरदः शतम्

शृणुयाम शरदः शतम्

प्रप्रेषाम शरदः शतम्

अदीना, स्याम शरदः शतम्

भूयश्च शरदः शतात् ॥ शु. य. ३६।२४

“ May we, for a hundred autumns see that bright  
eye—God—ordained arise before us,

May we live a hundred autumns;

May we hear for a hundred autumns,

May we speak well for a hundred autumns,

May we hold our heads high for a hundred autumns,

Yea, even beyond a hundred autumns. ”

The Yajurveda interprets the Rigvedic verse by saying that living a hundred years is not just dragging on the existence, it is living with the bodily organs in the fittest condition, and living an honourable life, with the head held high. It also adds that hundred years need not be taken actually as the utmost limit of existence, we may live even longer.

### (3) The Complete Life.

The Atharvaveda reproduces the same idea in the following —

पश्येम शरदः शतम् ॥ १ ॥

जीवेम शरदः शतम् ॥ २ ॥

बुध्येम शरदः शतम् ॥ ३ ॥

रोद्देम शरदः शतम् ॥ ४ ॥

पूषेम शरदः शतम् ॥ ५ ॥

भवेम शरदः शतम् ॥ ६ ॥

भूयेम शरदः शतम् ॥ ७ ॥

भूयसीः शरदः शतात् ॥ ८ ॥ अ. १९/६७

- 1 May we see through a hundred autumns.
- 2 May we live through a hundred autumns
- 3 May we know through a hundred autumns
- 4 May we rise through a hundred autumns
- 5 May we prosper through a hundred autumns.
- 6 May we live ( remain established ) through a hundred autumns
- 7 May we become ( grow ) through a hundred autumns
8. Even more than a hundred autumns

Note that in this expanded conception of a complete life, the pursuit of knowledge has been included as an essential requirement (बुद्धि). The word *Buddhi* (बुद्धि) came to mean the highest mental power [cf *Phagavaad Gita* III 42 — इन्द्रियेभ्य पर मनः । मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिः । *manas* (Mind) is beyond the senses, and beyond *manas* is *Buddhi* ( Higher Intellect ) ]

#### (4) Prayer for Vision

चक्षुर् नो षहि चक्षुषे  
 चक्षुर् निख्यै तनूय ।  
 स चेदं वि च पश्येम ॥

ॐ १०/१५८/४

" Give sight to our eyes •  
Sight to our bodies so that they can see  
May we discern and survey the world. "

Here not only the physical but also the mental sight is prayed for.

### (5) Prayer for all-round Existence

The Atharva veda also expresses the idea of a full life in different words •

वाक्च आसन् नसो; प्राणश्चतुर् अक्ष्णोः श्रोत्र कर्णयोः ।  
अपलिताः केशा अशोणा दन्ता बहु बाह्वोर् बलम् ॥ १ ॥  
ऊर्वोर् ओजो जङ्घयोर् जवः पादयोः ।  
प्रतिष्ठा अरिष्टानि मे सर्वात्मानिभृष्टः ॥ २ ॥ अ. १९।६०

- 1 " May I have voice in my mouth, breath in my nostrils,  
Sight in my eyes, hearing in my ears,  
hair that has not turned grey, teeth that have not decayed,  
and great strength in my arms.
  2. " May I have power, in my thighs, swiftness in my legs, steadfastness in my feet  
May all my members be uninjured and my  
soul unimpaired. '
- , Here a noble ideal of physical culture has been set up



## (6) Prayer for Health

वात आ वातु भयज  
 दधु मयोनु नो हृदे  
 प्र ण आयूषि वारिषत् ॥

१ १ ॥ १ ऋ० १०।२८६।१

May Vata blow His balm on us,  
 Vata — the Source of  
 well being and health  
 May He lengthen our life

Here Vata ( literally, Air ) is a symbolic name of God as is the Giver of life and health Non figuratively fresh air blows us: well being ( दधु ), health ( मयस् ) and life ( आयुस् )

## (7) Full span of Life

शतमिन्नु शरदा अन्ति देवा  
 यत्र नक्षत्रा जरस तनूनाम् ।  
 पुत्रासो यत्र पित्रो भवन्ति  
 मा नो मर्या रीरिपतायुर्गन्ते ॥

ऋ १।८९।९

A hundred autumns stand before us, Gods!  
 Within whose space you bring our bodies to  
 decay ,

Within whose space the sons become fathers,  
Break not in the middle the course of fleeting  
life

Life should be lived to the full extent—one should  
not die prematurely

### (8) Protection against old age

मा नो अघे सख्यं विघ्नायि  
य मर्विष्टा अभि विदुःकवि सर ।  
नमो न रूप जरिमा भिनाति  
पुरा तस्या अभिवस्तरधाहि ॥

क १/११/१०

' O Agni! break not our ancestral friendship,  
being one with deep knowledge and a sage  
Like the (overspreading) cloud old age impairs  
the form

before that evil comes near, protect me  
Compare the following prayer for perpetual youth

अजरासुखे सखे स्वाम ।

क ७/५४/२

' O God<sup>1</sup> May we be ever—youthful in thy  
friendship

One should not only have long life but also prolonged  
youth and vigour

## (9) Life of Freedom

उरु णस्तन्वे तन

उरु धयाय नस्तुधि ।

उरु णो यन्धि जीवसे ॥ ऋ० ८।६।१२

' Give freedom for our bodies, (1)  
Give freedom for our dwelling,  
Give freedom for our life ' १

*Uru* ( उरु ) means freedom, wide room for free movement, absence of constraint Compare—

देवी. पल्लवोर् उरु न कुणोत । ऋ० १०।१२८।०

' Ye Six Divine Expanses ! grant us freedom '

( Six Divine Expanses imply the six quarters—the four directions and upper and lower spaces )

## (10) The Happy Life

इन्द्र श्रेष्ठानि द्रविणानि धेहि

चिन्ति दक्षस्य सुभगत्वम् अहमे ।

पोष रयाणाम् अरिष्टि तनूना

स्वाङ्गान वाच सुदिनत्वम् अहाम् ॥ ऋ २।२१।६

' O God ! bestow on us the best treasures  
The efficient mind, and good fortune,  
The increase of wealth, the health of bodies,  
The sweetness of speech and the fairness  
of days ' १

Our days ( अह ) should not be just days, but fair, bright, happy days ( सुदिन ):

(11) Prayer for wealth

भू भुवः स्वः

मुप्रजाः प्रजाभिः स्वाम् ।

सुवीरा वीरेः सुपुषा पोषेः ॥

य. ( वा ) ८।५३

' Earth, Ether, Sky !

May we be rich in off spring,

rich in heroes, rich in nourishing food ! '

The Veda accepts life in its fulness. It does not reject, or neglect what is worldly ( एहिक ), as many religious sects, attached to other worldly ( पारलौकिक ) interests, do.

(12) Strength for all

बलं धेहि तनूयु नो

बलम् इन्द्रानलुत्य नः ।

बलं तोकाम्य तनवाय जीवसे

त्वं हि बलदा असि ॥

॥

ऋ. ३।५३।१८

" O God ! give strength to our bodies, strength to our draught bulls, strength to our seed and progeny that they may live, "

For Thou art He who giveth strength. ॥ ३॥५३॥१८ ॥

## (13) Health, Life and Light of Intellect

तनुवा ऽ अग्ने ऽ सि तन्व मे  
 पाछायुदी ऽ अग्ने ऽ स्यायुर्मे देहि ।  
 वचो॑दा ऽ अग्ने ऽ सि वचो॑ मे देहि ।  
 अग्ने यग्ने तन्वा ऽ उन तम ऽ आवृण ॥

य. ( वा ) ३।१७

'Thou God! art protector of the body protect  
 my body

Thou art giver of long life give me long life

Thou art giver of intellectual brilliance\* gave me  
 intellectual brilliance

O God! whatever is wanting in my body, supply  
 that for me "

## (14) Intellectual Brilliance

मयि वचो॑ अयो यशो॑ यो यशस्य यत्नय ।  
 तमयि प्रजापतिर्दिवि द्याम् इव ददतु ॥

अ ६।६।१३

'In me there be; the brightness of intellect,  
 fame, the power that is in sacrifice ,

That may the Lord of creation establish firmly  
 in me like the light in heaven

1.2.3

Similar is, the prayer for higher intelligence

( श्री, मेधा ), See above Nos 39 41.

## The Path of Action II Heroism in the Battle of Life.

### (15) Valour and Wisdom

अस्मे वो ऽ अस्विन्द्रियम्  
अस्मे नृमणस उत क्रतुर्  
अस्मे वचाँ ० मि सन्तु व. ।

य. ( वा ) ९।२२

‘ In us be your power,  
in us your manly vigour and wisdom,  
and brightness of intellect ’

### (16) Prayer for Manliness

इमा ब्रह्मेन्द्र तुभ्यं वसि ॥  
दा नृम्यो नृणा शूर शव. ।  
तेभिर् मव सक्रतुर्वैपु चाकन्-  
नुत त्रायस्व गणत उत स्तीन् ॥

अ. १०।१४।४

“ These holy prayers, O God,  
I have sung to thee.  
Grant to the men, the  
Strength of men, O Hero !  
Be of one mind with  
those in whom thou joiest ,  
And protect the singers and  
their companions ”

## (17). Victorious wisdom.

ये स्या मनोर्यज्ञियास्ते शृणोतन । १ ।  
 यद्वो देवा ईमहे तद् दधातन ।  
 जैत्र क्रतुं ययिमद् वीरवद् यशस्  
 तद् देवानाम् अबो अथा वृणीमहे ॥

।

ऋ. १०।३६।१०

' O ye who are adorable to man ' listen ;  
 Give us Gods ' what we pray for  
 Victorious wisdom, fame with wealth and with  
 heroes.

We crave to day this grace of the Gods.

## (18) Intelligence and Valour

त नो दात मरुतो वाजिन रथ  
 आपान ब्रह्म चितयद् दिवे दिवे ।  
 इय स्तोत्रम्यो वृजनेषु कारवे  
 सति मेधाम् अरिष्ट दुष्टर सहः ॥

१।१२।

ऋ. २।३४।७

Give us, O Maruts, a steed mighty in the car,  
 Prevailing prayer that brings remembrance day  
 by day.

Give food to your worshippers, and to your bards  
 in heroic conflicts give winning intelligence,  
 and valour unimpaired, unsurpassed.

## (19) Prayer for conquering might

इन्द्र पृथु कामु चिन् वृष्णं वनूतु धेहिनः ।  
 सवाजिद् उग्र यौस्वम् ॥ साम. १३१.

' O Indra ' in each fight and battle  
 give to our bodies manly strength,  
 O Powerful Lord, give ever conquering might.'  
 ( Samaveda )

## (20) The Battle of Life

अश्मन्वती रीयते अश्मध्वम्  
 उत्तिष्ठत प्र तरता सखायः ।  
 अत्रा जहाम ये अघ्नशेवाः  
 शिवान् उग्रम् उत्तरेमामि वाजान् ॥

ऋ. १०।५।३।८

य ( वा ) ३५।१०

अ. १२।२।२६

' The stream, filled with stones, flows on , gather  
 your strength ;

Stand erect, and cross over, *my friends* '

Here let us leave those who are opposed to  
 goodness , and let us cross over to powers  
 that are beneficent.'

Here ' the stream filled with stones ' implies our life  
 filled, with difficulties ; we must ' stand erect,' i. e.  
 conduct ourselves heroically and get over those



difficulties. There should be no compromise with powers of evil.

'Gather your strength' implies that people should combine (सम् signifies it) to fight the difficulties.

For "उत्तिष्ठ", "stand erect," compare—

कृषी न ऊर्ध्वान् चरयाय जीवसे

ऋ. १।२६।२८

"O God! make us erect in our walk and our life"

In the Atharva-veda there is a variation of the text, but this serves to make the meaning clearer. The Atharva veda verse reads

अदमन्वती रीयते स रमन्व

वीर्यम् प्रवर्त्ता सखायः ।

अत्रा जहीत ये असन् दुरेवा

अनवीमान् उत्तरेमाभि वाजान् ॥

अ. १२।२।२६

'The stream, filled with stones, flows on,

gather your strength,, and

Quit you like herpes and cross over,

my friends !

Leave here those who are evil-minded ,

Let us cross over to powers that are beneficent!

The changes imply that the Atharva-veda understands "Stand erect" in the Rigveda to mean

"Be heroic," and अशेषा to imply powers of evil, and it paraphrases शिवान् ( good ) by अनमीवान् (not evil, good).

In a verse following the above, the Atharva-veda further quotes the Rigveda with explanatory words :—

उत्तिष्ठता प्रतरता सखायो—

इदमन्वती नदी स्यन्दत इयम् ।

अत्रा जहीत ये असन्नशिवाः

शिवान् स्योनान् उत्तरेमाभि वाजान् ॥

अ. १२।२।२७

' Stand up erect ! cross, O friends !

This stony river flows on.

Leave here those that are opposed to goodness,

Let us cross over to powers that are good  
and pleasant.'

[ Here the addition of नदी—river—after the Stony ( stream )—इदमन्वती—definitely fixes the meaning of the Rigvedic verse Again for the archaic रीयते—flows—the modern स्यन्दते is used. Similarly, the archaic अशेषाः is substituted by अशिवाः and the meaning of शिवान् is amplified by the addition of स्योनान्—pleasant. ]

In the second line of the couplet following the Atharva-veda verse quoted above, there seems to be a paraphrase of the Rigvedic verse :

अतिक्रामन्तो दुरिता पदानि

शतं हिमाः सर्ववीरा मदेम ।

अ. १२।२।२८

11 L 'Having crossed over troublous places, may we enjoy (ourselves) with all our heroes for a hundred winters (years)'

### (21) March to Victory.

The following is an exhortation, presumably to soldiers, for a march to victory.

प्रेता जयता नर इन्द्रो वः शुर्म यच्छतु ॥

उमा वः सन्तु बाहवो ऽ नाभृष्या ययासय ॥

111

ऋ. १०।१०३।१३, साम. १८६२,

य (वा) १७।४८, अ. ३।१९।७

'Go forward and conquer, ye heroes!

May God give you protection.

Valiant be your arms, so that you  
may remain unwounded.'

112

The occurrence of the verse in each of the four Vedas indicates its representative character. The most characteristic element in Vedic morals is the heroic outlook

Note that though divine protection is sought, the fighters are enjoined to protect themselves from injury by valour. God helps the valiant.

### (22) God the Vallant

Vedic morals are found not only in exhortations and prayers but also in the conception of Divinities,

perfect beings, whose qualities indicate ideal virtues. In the following verse God ( Indra ) is contemplated as strong and valiant

त्वम् इन्द्र बलाद् अवि संहसो जात ओजसः

त्वं धृपन् धृपेद् असि ॥

ऋ. १०।१५३।२, सा. १२०, अ. २०।१३।५

' O God ! Thy existence rests on strength,  
valour and power.

Thou mighty One ! art strong indeed '

### (23) The Leader in Battle

गोत्राभिद् गोविद् वज्रबाहु

जयन्तम् अवम प्रमृणन्तम् ओजसा ।

इमं सजाता अनु वीर्यध्वम्

इन्द्र सखायो अनु सं रमध्वम् ॥

ऋ. १०।१०३।६, सा. १८५४,

अ. ६।९७।३, १९।१३।६, य (वा) १७।३६

" Cleaver of fortifications,

Victor of earth, armed with thunder,

who quells an army and with might destroys it ,

Follow Him, brothers !

Quit yourselves like heroes ' and friends ! gather ye  
up strength like him.

[ The powerful rhythm of the lines symbolises  
a heroic idea ]

## (24) God of Victory

अस्माकम् इन्द्रः समृतेषु प्वजे—

प्वस्माक या इपवस् ता जयन्तु ।

अस्माकं वीरा उत्तरे भव—

न्वस्माँ उ देवा भवता हवेषु ॥

ऋ. १०।१०३।११, सा. १८५९,

अ. १९।१३।११, य (वा) १७।४३

\* Ours be Indra when our flags are gathered ;

May our arrows be victorious ;

May our heroes prevail in battle ,

Ye Gods ! protect us in the shout of onset \*

## (25) The Ideal Hero.

*In the following verse the divinity is described as an ideal hero.*

न वीळ्वे नमते न रियराय

न शर्धते दस्युजूताय सुवान् ।

अज्रा इन्द्रस्य गिर्यश् चिद् ऋष्या

गम्भीरे चिद् भवति गाधम् असौ ॥ ऋ ६।२४।८

" He who is being worshipped does not bend before the strong nor before the firm ;

Nor before the arrogant challenger instigated by the wicked.

For Indra the lofty mountains are as plains ;

For him even in the deeps there is a ford."

The Deity is Indra, who symbolises the heroic ideal.

According to this conception the ideal hero is indomitable and cannot be over-awed or brow-beaten.

Again, his resourcefulness is immense neither tall mountains nor deep streams can block his way. Metaphorically, even where there seems to be no hope, he finds a way out.

The solemnity of the rhythm adds to the power of the idea

### (26) Will to Victory

इमा तु क भुवना सीपधामे—

न्द्रश्च विश्वे च देवा. ॥

ऋ. १०।१५३।१

साम. ४५२, १११०

अ. २०।६३।१, १२४।४

श. य. २५।४६

We will bring these existing worlds into subjection,  
With Indra and all Gods to aid us "

This heroic sentiment is most typical of the Vedas. The verse occurs in all the four Vedas and in two of them, twice

Similar sentiments are expressed in the following—

मुर्वीर्यस्य पतयः स्याम

ऋ. १०।१३१।६

" May we be lords of hero vigour ! "

वृभिर् नृवन्तः स्याम

ऋ. ७।४१।३

" May we be rich in heroes "

न भेम न धनिष्ये उग्रस्य सख्ये तव

' O God ! having received the friendship  
of Thee, the valiant,  
We will neither fear nor feel weary.'

**(27) Prayer for Divine Virtues.**

तेजो ऽसि तेजो मयि धेहि ।  
वीर्यम् अस्मि वीर्यं मयि धेहि ।  
बलम् अस्मि बलं मयि धेह्योवोऽस्योजो मयि धेहि ।  
मन्युर् अस्मि मन्यु मयि धेहि ।  
सहो ऽसि सहो मयि धेहि ॥

य. (वा) १९।९

Thou art the fiery spirit, give me the fiery spirit,  
Thou art manly vigour, give me manly vigour;  
Thou art power, give me power,  
Thou art energy, give me energy,  
Thou art battle fury, give me battle fury,  
Thou art conquering might, give me conquering  
might '

Man approaches God by developing divine qualities  
in him

**(28) The Strong pray to the Strong.**

वृषा त्वा वृषणं हुवे  
वज्रिन् चित्राभिर् उतिमिः ।  
१. १. वावन्म हि प्रतिष्ठुति वृषा इवः ॥

श्र. ८।६३।३३

" Strong, I call on thee, the Strong,  
O Thunderer with thy manifold graces,  
Thou hast received this praise. Strong is my call "  
Man prays to God, valiant through his 'own  
valour.

(29) Heroic Renown.

सामन् नु राये निधिमन्वन्न करामहे सु पुरुष भवति ।  
ता नो विश्वानि जरिता ममत्तु  
परातर सु निरिक्तित् जिहीताम् ॥

ऋ. १०।६९।२

" Here is the hymn for wealth and plentiful food ;  
let us do many deeds of glory.  
May the singer rejoice in these our doings.  
Let destruction flee to far off places "

Here the reference is to deeds of valour which are  
celebrated by poets in ballads and epics Hence the  
prayer is for heroic valour.

(30) Epic Glory

अयेम कारे पुरुद्वृत्त कारिणो  
मि तिष्ठेम दूत्यः ।  
गृभिर् वृत्रं हन्याम शुश्रुयान  
चायेर् इन्द्र म षो भियः ॥

ऋ. ८।२१।१२



' May we be victors, O much invoked,  
 ( Celebrated ) in the songs of poets,  
 and challenge the wicked.

May we with heroes smite the power of evil (Vritra)  
 and show forth our strength

O God ! further Thou our intellectual powers '

*Ballads and epics celebrated the valour of great heroes. In this verse there is an exhortation for such heroic deeds as would provide a theme for epic poets or ballad singers*

[ It is interesting to note that the Vedic word Kāri had the same meaning as the Greek word ' poet ' came to have later on viz. maker ]

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# The Path of Action III. Good Life.

## (31) "Live and Strive"

आ रोहतायुर् अरुं वृषाना  
अनुर्वे यतमाना यतिष्ठ ।  
इह स्पृष्टा सुव्रणिमा सज्जोषा  
दीर्घम् आयुः करिषि जीवसे वः ॥

अ. १०।१८।६

'Live your full lives and welcome old age,  
all of you striving one behind the other.  
May the Deity, Maker of fair things, be gracious  
and lengthen out the days of your existence.'  
In Atharva-veda the last line reads :

सर्वम् आयुर् नयतु जीवनाय

अ. १२।१२४

'And lead your whole lives on to full existence.'

Here the ideal of a life of action is set. Man  
should always exert himself (यतमाना).

## (32) Give up Indolence.

व्रातारो देवा अधि वचन्ता नो  
मा नो निद्रा ईसत मोत जलियाः ।  
वयं सोमस्य विश्वहृ प्रियासः  
सुवीर्यसो विदयर्म् आ वदेम ॥

अ. ८।४८।१४

' Give us your blessings, O Gods !

' Preservers '

Never may sleep or idle talk control us  
But evermore may we, as friends  
of the Deity,  
and perfect heroes, speak to the synod

Sleep and idle talk cause much waste of valuable time Hence the prayer of votaries of active life to save them from these

(33) Sloth is ungodly

इच्छन्ति देवाः सुषुप्तं

न स्वप्नाय स्पृहयन्ति ।

यन्ति प्रमादम् अवन्द्रा ॥

ऋ ८।२।१८

' The Gods desire the man who presses  
the juice ( i e performs the ritual )

They do not like sleep

They, the unsleeping, punish dissoluteness

The following line conveys a similar idea

न ऋते ध्रान्तस्य सखाय देवाः ।

ऋ ४।३।११

' Gods befriend none but him who has toiled

[ For प्रमाद compare the *Bhagavad Gita*

। प्रमादादस्य निद्राभिस्तान् निवृणोति भारत ( १४।८ )

' That ( तमोगुण — the power of inertia ) binds by  
dissoluteness, indolence and sleep, O scion of Bharata !

Though applying particularly to the performance of  
ritual, the verse generally applies to life as a whole.

For अतन्द्राः, unsleeping, compare *Bhagavad Gita*

यदि ह्यहं न वेत्तुं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः । (३।२३)

' If I had not engaged in action,  
unsleeping '

### (34) Divine Wakefulness

अस्वप्नजस्तथेयः सुषेवा  
अतन्द्रास्तो ऽतृष्णा अभमिष्ठा ।  
ते पावव, सध्वञ्चो निपया  
ऽमे तत्र न, पाववसुर ॥

क. ४।४।१२

' O effulgent Deity ( Agni ), who art unsetting,  
may Thy protecting powers,  
that know no slumber, are speedy  
and beneficent,  
are alert ( literally, sleepless ), friendly  
and unwearied,  
may they, combined, take their places  
here and preserve ( us ) '

## (35) Honest Labour

अक्षे मा दीव्यः कृषिम् इत् कृषव  
 वित्ते रमस्व बहु मन्यमानः ।  
 तत्र गावः कितव तत्र जायाः \*  
 तन्मे वि चष्टे सवितायम् अयः ॥

ऋ. १०।३४।३३

' Do not play with dice; cultivate thy cornland;  
 Delight in that wealth, thinking highly of it  
 O Gambler! there is thy cattle and there thy wife,-  
 So the noble Savita has told me.'

Here the habit of trying to grow rich by gambling  
 is denounced and honest labour and its gains are recom-  
 mended

Here a man is called upon to work in his field with  
 his cattle and run the household with his wife

## (36) Wealth through the path of Law

परि चिन् मर्तो द्रविण ममन्याद्  
 क्रतुस्य पया नमसा विशासेत् ।  
 उत स्वेन क्रतुना स वेदेव  
 श्रियां दक्ष मनसा ब्रह्मयात् ॥

ऋ. १०।३१।२

' Let a man think well on wealth and strive to win  
 it by the path of Law and by worship,  
 And let him counsel with his own mental insight,  
 and grasp with his mind still greater ability'

A man should obtain wealth by honest and rightful means, and become progressively efficient ( दक्ष ) by taking thought with himself. Rita, eternal moral law, should guide all attempts at growing rich.

### (37) Unselfishness

मोषम् अन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेतः  
 सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत्त तस्य ।  
 नार्यमण पुष्यति नो सखायं  
 केवलाद्यो भवति केवलादौ ॥

ऋ. १०।११७।६

"The unwise man who offers them neither to Aryaman nor to his fellowmen, obtains foodgrains to little purpose,

I tell you the truth — it is as good as his death

(For) one who feeds all by himself sins all by himself '

The last line literally means 'The lonely ( केवला ) eater is the lonely sinner

Life must be lived on altruistic principles. The *Bhagavad Gita*, proposing to interpret the ancient outlook on life—presumably the Vedic ( with reference to Prajapati and creation )—says

मुञ्जते ते त्वघ पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् । ३।१३

'Those evil people partake of sin who only cook for themselves.'

This seems to be a paraphrase of the *Rigvedic* line.

The word अन्व ( sin, sinful man ) is common to both the passages

### (38) The Good Path

अग्ने नय मुपया राये अस्मान्  
विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।  
युयोध्व १ स्मज् जुहुयाणम् एनो  
भूयिष्ठा से नमउक्ति विधेम ॥

ऋ ११।८१।१

य. वा. ३।३५, ७।४३, ४०।१६

Agni ! lead us by the right path to well being  
Thou, God ! who knowest all duties ,  
Remove from us the sin that makes us go astray  
We will offer Thee our fullest adoration

Here God is prayed to for keeping men in the right path, and taking them out of the path of evil and sin

### (39) The Right Path

स्वस्ति पन्थाम् अनु चरेम  
सूर्यचन्द्रमहाविव ।  
पुनर् ददताऽमता  
जानता च गमेमहि ॥

ऋ ५।५१।१५

'We shall follow the path of righteousness like the sun and the moon :

We shall associate again with the liberal, the kind, the knowing.'

"Like the sun and moon" implies the absolute regularity in following the law. The strictness with which the sun and the moon follow the natural law should be observed by man in the case of moral law.

Good life requires keeping company of the good.

#### (40) Rise through Good Life

परि माग्ने दुश्चरित्वाद् वाचस्वा

मा सुचरिते भज ।

उद् आयुषा स्वायुषोदसाम्

अमूर्ता २ ५ अनु ॥

यजु (वा) ४२८

'Prevent me, O Agni ! from evil conduct,

make me a sharer in good conduct

I have risen up with life, have risen up with good  
life,

following the immortals '

Goodness is divine, to follow gods is also to tread in the path of goodness.



## (41) Pursuit of Goodness

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवा  
 भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिः यज्जनाः  
 स्थिरैर् अङ्गैर् तुष्टुवासस् तनूमिर्  
 व्यशेम देवहितं यद् आसुः ॥

ऋ. १।८९।८

' May we listen, O Gods ! to  
 what is good with our ears,  
 and see, O Holy Ones ! what  
 is good with our eyes ,  
 with firm limbs and bodies,  
 offering praise-songs to you,  
 may we enjoy the term  
 of life allotted by Gods

It is not enough that we should live long, but  
 should also live well

## (42) Good-will

यज्जगतो दूरम् उदैति दैवं  
 तद् उ सुतस्य तथैवेति ।  
 दूरज्जम ज्योतिषा ज्योतिरेक  
 तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम् अस्तु ॥

य. ( बा. ) ३४।१

\* The divine (subtle) force that goes far away from the waking person, and that goes likewise from the sleeping,

the one light of lights, far moving,—

may that mind of mine will what is good.\*

The foundation of good action is good will in the mind.

### (43) Good-will

यत् प्रज्ञानम् उत चेतो धृतिश्च

यज्ज्योतिरन्तरं अमृतम् प्रजासु ।

यस्मान्न ऋते किञ्चन कर्म क्रियते

तन्मे मनः शिवसकल्पम् अस्तु ॥

य. ( वा. ) ३४।३

\* That which is the source of high knowledge, and is the intellect and the power of memory, that which is the deathless flame within living beings,

Without which no action whatever is performed, may that mind of mine will what is good

The Veda goes to the spring of all action—the mind of man—and desires goodness there. If the will that proceeds from the depths of our being be good, then our whole conduct is good

This subtle, psychological approach to moral conduct is rare even in modern times

[ Note the Vedic words for goodness—सु (su) good (adjective), स्वस्ति (Swasti), righteousness, blissfulness, भद्र (bhadra), good, blissful, शिव (Siva), good ]

#### (44) Loyalty to a comrade

यस्मिन्त्याज सचिविद सखायं  
न तस्य वाच्यपि भागो अस्ति ।  
यदि शृणोत्यलक शृणोति  
नाह प्रवेद सुकृतस्य पन्थाम् ॥

अ. १०।७१।६

“In the case of one who has deserted a wise comrade, there is no grace even in the words (holy words derived from the scripture) uttered by him. And if he listens (to the holy scripture), he listens in vain.

(For) He knows not the path of righteousness ”

Religious conformity is of no value without fundamental morality. Loyalty to a comrade is part of elementary morality

#### (45) What is Religion.

सत्यं बृहद् ऋतम् उग्रं  
दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।  
सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्युरु लोकं  
पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ॥

अ. १२।१।१

' Truth, great Law that is stern,  
consecration, austerity, prayer  
and sacrifice ( ritual ),  
these uphold the earth.

May that earth, the mistress of our past and future,  
make a wide world for us.'

If, as the *Mahabharata* says, what upholds the earth is Dharma ( धर्म ), then these six, according to the Veda, are Dharma. Of these, the first two—Truth ( सत्य ) and Order ( ऋतु ) or Eternal Law, are the fundamental principles of moral life [ Cf.

ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीदात् तपसोऽभ्यजायत

ऋ. १०।११०।१

From perfect austerity were born

Eternal Law and Truth ( in the beginning of creation );  
consecration ( दीक्षा ) and austerity ( तपः ) are the  
foundation of personal character [ Cf. Yajur Veda  
मतेन दीक्षाम् आप्नोति । य. (वा) १९।३० ' By self dedication  
( vrata ) one receives consecration ' ] and prayer  
( ब्रह्म, meaning words of prayer, also scripture and  
scriptural knowledge ) and sacrifice ( यज्ञ, ritual ) make  
religion in relation to the Divinity.

' That Earth [ वा पृथिवी ] ' means the Earth so  
upheld by Truth etc. So the Vedas accept the earth and

material existence to the fullest extent but subject to the fundamental moral and spiritual laws. Here is the difference between the positive and 'this worldly' (ऐहिक) and active (attached to कर्म) outlook of the Vedas and the exclusively ascetic, negative and inactive (seeking नैकर्म्य) attitude of cults like Buddhism, and the other worldly attitude of certain devotional cults that became very influential in later times.

#### (46) God is Truth

सत्यम् इद् वा उ त वयम्  
इन्द्र सवाम नानृतम् ॥

ऋ ८।६२।१२

'Let us extol this Indra who is truth and not untruth' or

Cf 'सविता सत्यधर्मा' (अ. १।२४।१) 'God has truth as the law of His being

#### (47) Gods represent Truth

युवां देवास् त्रय एवाद्यास  
सत्या सत्यस्य ददगे पुरस्तात् ॥

ऋ ८।५७।२

'O Asvins ! The three and thirty (Deities) that are Truths,   
 saw you two in front of Truth

## (48) Prayer from Truthful Life

ऋतवाकेन सत्येन धृष्ट्या तपसा सुत  
इन्द्रायेंदो परि सव ।

ऋ. १।१२३।२

' O Indu ( libation ) ! flow towards Indra,  
pressed with words of Law, with Truth,  
with Reverence and with pure life (austerity)'

## (49) Truth in Speech and Action

ऋतं वदन् ऋतुमुन्म  
सत्यं वदन् सत्यकर्मन् ।  
धृष्ट्या वदन् सोम राजन्  
तपसा सोमो वरिष्ठः  
इन्द्रायेंदो परि सव ॥

ऋ. १।१२३।४

' Declaring Eternal Law, splendied by eternal Law,  
Speaking truth and truthful in action,  
Speaking reverence, O King Soma !  
O Soma ! Thou art adorned by the Maker.  
O Indu ! flow towards Indra.'

' Soma ' represents the libation offered to God.  
The libation must be preceded by a life that is truthful in  
word and deed, and reverent, and controlled by *Ṛ*  
(the fundamental moral principle ).

ध्वा ( *Sraddha* ) reverence, faith, joined to truth and law, produces the higher spiritual quality in man.

### (50) Straightforwardness of Mind

ऋतं शसन्त ऋतु दीभ्यानां

दिवस् पुत्रासो अमुरस्य वीराः ।

विप्र पदम् अङ्गिरसो दधाना

) यज्ञस्य धाम प्रथम मनन्त ॥

ऋ. १०।६३।२

' Praising the Eternal Law, thinking straight  
( aright ),

Sons of Heaven, sons of Light,  
Angirases held the rank of sages  
and first observed the statute  
of sacrifice '

Angirases, the great Vedic sages, qualified as sages and priests ( who could perform rituals ) by the twofold process of attachment to the fundamental moral Law and thinking in a straight and truthful manner.

For ऋतु, straight, compare the Yajurveda prayer

अङ्गिरा सत्यम् उपगेष १९

य. ( वा ) ५।५

" May I go straight to truth "

[ The *Bhagavad Gita* mentions आर्जवम्, substantive form of ऋतु—straightforwardness—as a divine quality

Ch. 16 1) and as a means of self culture (ch. 17. 14))  
The term implies intellectual honesty.

(51) Gods, the Protectors of Eternal Law,

ता वां विश्वस्य गोपा

देवा देवेषु यशसा

ऋतावाना यजते पुनदधसा ॥

ऋ ८।२५।१

'I worship you who guard this all,

Gods, holiest among the Gods,

Upholders of the Eternal Law,

whose power is sanctified'

[The Deities are Mitra and Varuna]

These Gods specially uphold the Eternal Law.

Also compare —

ऋतस्य मा प्रदिशो यथंयन्ति

ऋ ८।१००।१ (See No 133 above)

'The Eternal Law's commandments make me  
(i. e. Indra) mighty'

God has been identified with ऋतु—Eternal Law,  
just as He has been identified with सत्य—Truth.

See ऋ. ४।४०।१ [No 117 above]

[ऋतु, Eternal Order, came to be known as  
Dharma (धर्म) in later times, signifying the supra-



ध्दा ( *Sraddha* ) reverence, faith, joined to truth and law, produces the higher spiritual quality in man.

### (50) Straightforwardness of Mind

ऋतं वसन्तं ऋतुं दीनानां  
 दिवस् पुत्रासो अनुरक्ष्य वीराः ।  
 विप्रं पदम् अङ्गिरसो दधाना  
 यज्ञस्य धाम प्रथमं मनन्त ॥

ऋ. १०।६।२

‘ Praising the Eternal Law, thinking straight  
 ( aright ),

Sons of Heaven, sons of Light,  
 Angirasas held the rank of sages  
 and first observed the statute  
 of sacrifice

Angirasas, the great Vedic sages, qualified as sages and priests ( who could perform rituals ) by the twofold process of attachment to the fundamental moral Law and thinking in a straight and truthful manner.

For ऋतुं, straight, compare the Yajurveda prayer

अङ्गिरा सत्यम् उपमेय १९

य. ( वा ) ५।५

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[ The *Bhagavad Gita* mentions अङ्गिरम्, substantive form of ऋतुं—straightforwardness—as a divine quality

(Ch. 16. 1) and as a means of self culture (ch. 17. 14))  
The term implies intellectual honesty

(51) Gods, the Protectors of Eternal Law.

ता वां विश्वस्य गोषा

देवा देवेभ्य यशिया

ऋतावाना यजते पूतदक्षसा ॥

ऋ ८।२५।१

'I worship you who guard this all,  
Gods, holiest among the Gods,  
Upholders of the Eternal Law,  
whose power is sanctified'

[The Deities are Mitra and Varuna]

These Gods specially uphold the Eternal Law.

Also compare —

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'The Eternal Law's commandments make me  
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God has been identified with ऋतु—Eternal Law,  
just as He has been identified with सत्य—Truth.  
See ऋ. ४।४०।५ [ No 117 above ]

[ ऋतु, Eternal Order, came to be known as  
Dharma ( धर्म ) in later times, signifying the funda-

mental principles of life which must be accepted for one's conduct, whether one believes in the divinity or not. It is in respect of this attitude that there is no break with Vedic tradition in Buddhism, Jainism and similar non-conformist cults in India ].

### (52) Beauty lies in Eternal Law

ऋतस्य दृष्ट्वा घृणानि सन्ति  
 पुरुषि चन्द्रा वपुषे वपूषि ।  
 ऋतेन दीर्घमिषणन्त पृथ  
 ऋतेन गाव ऋतम् आ विवेशुः ॥

ऋ ४।२३।९

Firm seated are Eternal Law's foundations ,  
 in its lovely form are many beauties  
 By Eternal Law they give us long—lasting nurture;  
 by Eternal Law, have cattle entered the law.

The Eternal Law that produces cosmic order also produces the order or symmetry that underlies beauty. Hence Gods ( Cosmic Powers ) that are upholders of Eternal Law are all beautiful. Man and the world of matter participate in good, beautiful, orderly life by the power of the Eternal Law

### (53) Happiness through attachment to Law

To the man who lives according to Law the earth is full of sweetness, and he seeks to make a heaven of the earth. '

मधु वाता ऋतायते  
 मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः ।  
 माध्वीर् नः सन्वोपधीः ॥ ६ ॥  
 मधु नक्तम् उतोपसो  
 मधुमत् पार्थिवं रजः ।  
 मधु द्यौर अस्तु नः पिता ॥ ७ ॥  
 मधुमान् नो वनस्पतिर्  
 मधुमौ अस्तु सूर्यः ।  
 माध्वीर् गावो भवन्तु नः ॥ ८ ॥

ऋ. १।१०

" For one who lives  
 according to Eternal Law,  
 the winds are full of sweetness,  
 the rivers pour sweets,  
 so may plants be

full of sweetness for us (6)

" Sweet be the night and sweet the dawns  
 Sweet the dust of the Earth,  
 Sweet be our Father Heaven to us (7)

" May the tall tree be full of sweets for us,  
 and full of sweetness the sun;  
 May the kine be full of sweetness for us ' (8)

This is Vedic "paganism"—the joy in the earth,  
 but a joy consecrated under the control of Eternal  
 (moral) Law (ऋत).

## The Path of Action IV—Domestic Life.

Domestic Life ( गार्हपत्य or गृहस्थाश्रम ) occupies a central place in life according to the Vedas. It is established on love and marriage, the conjugal bond and the family ties.

### (54) The Adventurous Lover

यास्ते पुष्यावो अन्तः समुद्रे  
 हिरण्यपीरन्तरिक्षे चरन्ति ।  
 तामिर्यासि दुन्या सूर्यस्य  
 कामेन कृत भव इच्छमानः ॥३॥  
 पूषा मुचन्नुर्दिब आ पृथिव्या  
 इळस्पतिर्मधवा दशमवर्चा ।  
 य देवासो अददुः सूर्यामे  
 कामेन कृत तवस स्वध्वम् ॥४॥

ऋ ६।५।८।४

' O Pushan! thy golden ships travel to the end  
 of the ocean, in the air's mid region,

With those thou goest on an embassy to Surya  
 impelled by love, desirous of glory (3)

Pushan, the good friend of sky and earth Lord of  
 grace, liberal, of wondrous lustre,

Him, the love—impelled, swift moving and strong,  
 the Deities gave to Surya (4)

The natural phenomenon of the golden light of morning is transformed into the lovely allegory of the journey of Pushan on a golden boat across the ocean into the sky, impelled by his love of the beautiful daughter of Surya—Suryā—and desirous of winning glory to prove his claim to her hand. The gods find him worthy of her and give him to her ( in marriage ).

Note the earliest interpretation of the romantic ideal of love : a beautiful and heroic youth and a beautiful and noble lady whom he wins by love and the demonstration of valour in a brave adventure across the ocean and the sky.

Note the Aryan way of taking a wife . the bridegroom approaches the father for his consent.

It may also be pointed out that here the bridegroom is said to be "given to" his bride a point that establishes the dignified position of the woman

### (55) Marriage.

The suryā marriage which has served as the symbolical marriage ritual for Aryas for thousands of years keeps up the poetic idea of this conception ( Rigveda : X. 85-86 ).

The romantic conception of the love is maintained by the mutualness of the love.

सूर्यो यत् पत्न्ये संसन्तौ मनसा सविताददात् ॥

अ. २०।८५।९

' Savita gave Suryā to the bridegroom whom she admired with her heart.'

[ Here Suryā is said ' to be given ' to the bridegroom. This compared to the verse quoted above implies equality of the parties in marriage ].

The following is the description of the bridal ' procession.'

रैम्यासीद् अनुदेयी नारायसी न्योचनी ।

सूर्याया भद्रमिद् वासो गाथयेति परिष्कृतम् ॥

चित्तिर उपबर्हणं चक्षुरा अभ्यञ्जनम् ।

दौर्भूमिः कोश आसीद् यद् अयात् सूर्यां पतिम् ॥

क्र १०।८५।६-७

' The Raibhi metre was her bridal friend, the  
Narasamsi hymn one who took her home ,

Lovely was Suryā's robe,

decorated by the gāthā song.

' Thought was the pillow of her couch,

sight was the unguent of her eyes

Her jewellery was sky and earth

when Suryā went to her husband :

The abstract analogies for concrete ideas indicate the extremely subtle nature of the thought.

[ Those who are accustomed to calling Rigvedic poetry primitive should ponder over such passages which demonstrate a highly sophisticated stage of culture ].

(56) *The Marriage Vow*

गृभ्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्त  
 मया पत्या जरदक्षिर् यथासः ।  
 भगो अर्यमा सविता पुरधिर्  
 मह्यं त्वादुर् गार्हपत्याय देवाः ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।३६

" I take thy hand ( in mine ) for good fortune,  
 that thou mayest live to old age with me  
 thy husband ,

Gods, Bhaga, Aryama, Savita, Purandhi,  
 have given thee to me to be the mistress of  
 my home "

This marriage vow has united couples in India for  
 thousands of years " Being mistress of a home "—  
 गार्हपत्य—came to imply the living of the ideal domestic  
 life—गृहस्थाश्रम.

(57) *The Wife's Place in her New Home*

पूया त्वेवो नयतु हनग्यग्रा  
 ऽश्विना त्वा प्र बहता रथेन ।  
 गृहान् गच्छ गृहपती यथासौ  
 बधिनी त्वं विदधाम् आ वदासि ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।२६



"Let Pushan take thy hand and conduct thee hence,  
 May the two Aswins carry thee in their car.  
*Go to thy house so that thou mayest be the house-  
 hold's mistress ;*  
 A ruler { of the household }, thou wilt address the  
 assembly."

The wife's place in the household is an exalted one.

### (58) Queen of the Home

सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव  
 सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरा भव ।  
 ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव  
 सम्राज्ञी अधि देव्यु ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।४६

" Be an empress over thy father-in law,  
 an empress over thy mother-in-law ;  
 An empress over thy sister in law,  
 and an empress over thy brothers in-law."

### (59) Conjugal Unity

समञ्जन्तु बिभ्वे देवाः  
 सम् व्यापो हृदयानि नो ।  
 सं मातरिश्वा सं घाता  
 समु देष्ट्री दधातु नो ।

ऋ. १०।८५।४७

" May the Divine Powers, and the Apas unite our hearts,

May the Deities

( Matarishwa, Dhata, Deshtri )

bind us close."

In the Atharva-Veda which reproduces the Rigvedic verses, there are additions including the following prayer for the married couple :

इहेमाविन्द्र संनुद

चक्रवाकेव दंपती ।

अ. १४।२।६४

" Join this couple, O Indra !

like the chakravaka and his mate,"

It is to be noted that the love between husband and wife is expected to be mutual. The loving husband approaches the loving wife. ( उद्यती उद्यन्तः ।

ऋ १०।८५।३७ )

### (60) Joint Performance of Ritual

या दंपती समनसा

मुनुत आ च वाचतः ।

देवास्तो नित्ययाशिरा ॥

ऋ. ८।३१।५.

" O Gods ! with constant offerings  
 husband and wife will with one accord press  
 out and wash the Soma juice ( the libation  
 to the Divinity )."

(61) Joint-Life.

*The Veda delights in the happy family in which  
 husband and wife, blessed with sons and daughters, live  
 in mutual concord and enjoy longlife and prosperity*

पुत्रिणा ता कुमारीणा  
 विश्वम् आयुर् व्यश्नुतः ।  
 उमा दिरण्यपेशसा ॥

अ. ८।३१।८

" With sons and daughters by their side  
 The two enjoy the full span of life,  
 both decorated with ornaments of gold."

(62) The Loving Whisper.

While describing the action of the bow, the lovers' whisper is referred to

वक्ष्यन्तीवेदा गनीगन्ति कर्णं  
 प्रियं सखाय परिषस्वजाना ।  
 योषेव शिङ्के विठाताधि घन्मन्  
 ज्या इयं समने पारयन्ती ॥

अ. ६।७७।३

' As if desirous of speaking, she presses close to the ear,  
holding her beloved friend in her embraces ;  
Strained on the bow, she whispers like a woman,—  
This Bow string that preserves ( the warrior ) in the battle.'

Here the ideas of the heroism of the Kshatriya and the romanticism of the conjugal ( Grihastha ) life are inter mingled. The Vedas give full expression to both. [ It is interesting to note that ascetic cults like Buddhism opposed both these ideals. ]

### (63) Chastity is Godly

The Rigveda gives love and matrimony the most exalted status when it compares the Divinity to the beloved wife.

अनवद्या पतिजुष्टेव नारी ऋ. १/३/३

' Like the spotless wife beloved of her husband '

This also implies that chastity in the woman is a godly quality

### (64) Family Concord

The Atharva Veda sets a fine ideal of family concord

सहृदय सामनस्यम् आविष्टेप कृणोमि वः ।

अन्यो अन्यम् आभिर्हृत वत्स जातम् इवाग्न्था ॥१॥

अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्रो मात्रा भवतु समनाः ।

जाया पत्ये मधुमती वाच वदतु यन्तिवाम् ॥२॥

मा भ्राता भ्रातरं द्विषन् मा स्वसारम् उत स्वरा

सम्यक्ः समता भूत्वा वाच वदत मदया ॥३॥

अ. ३/३०

'I will make you of one heart, of one mind, and  
free from hate.

Love one another as the cow loves the calf she has  
borne. (1)

Let the son be loyal to the father,  
and of one mind with the mother ;

Let the wife speak sweet and gentle words to the  
husband : (2)

Let not brother hate brother,  
sister hate sister,

unanimous, united in purpose,  
speak you words with friendliness.' (3)

### (65) Family Unity.

The ideal of unity is further interpreted in the hymn

समानी प्रया सद वोऽन्नभागः

समाने योक्त्रे सह वो युनजिम् ।

सम्यक्चो ऽग्निं सपर्यवारा नाभिम् हवामिहः ॥

'Let your drink be the same, your food be common,  
I bind you together with one common bond

United, gather round the ( sacrificial ) fire  
as the spokes of a chariot-wheel gather round  
the nave.'

The family offered its daily prayer by congregating  
round the sacrificial fire in which libations of clarified  
butter were jointly thrown. This was the agni hotra.

## (66) The Home

The Veda considers the home as a sort of heaven on earth

भोजयाश्च सं मृजन्त्याशु  
भोजयास्ते कन्या ३ शुभमाना ।  
भोजस्येद पुष्करिणीव वेदम  
परिष्कृतं देवमानेव चित्रम् ॥

ऋ. १०।१०७।१०

' They adorn the swift steed for the liberal giver,  
for the liberal giver the resplendent bride waits,  
His is the home like the lotus-lake, decorated, and  
wonderful as the divine mansion '

The promises for the bountiful donor indicate the importance of the home and the care with which it was beautified

## (67) Sweet Home

In the following lines the poet wishes his going out of and return to home to be sweet

मधुमन् मे परायण  
मधुमत् पुनरायनम् ।  
ता नो देवा देवतया  
युव मधुमत्तस् कृतम् ॥

ऋ. १०।२४।६

' Sweet be my going forth, and sweet my return  
( home )

So Ye Twain Gods ( Aswins ) ' enrich us with  
sweetness through your divinity '

(68) Home remembered on sojourn

येषाम् अप्येति प्रवसन्

येषु सीमनसो बहु ।

दृष्टान् उपह्वयामहे

ते नो जानन्तु जानन् ॥

च ( वा ) ३।४२

'The home on which man, sojourning, contemplates,  
in which love abounds,

We call it to welcome us, may it know us who  
know it

The idea of the sojourning man ( प्रवसन् ) contem-  
plating on home touches a universal chord and is highly  
poetic We also find great beauty in the simple statement  
that there is much ( बहु ) love ( सीमनस ) in the home

(69) The Full Man

सीमो धेनु सीमो अर्बन्तम् आगु

सीमो वीर कमण्य ददाति ।

सादन्य विदध्य सभेयं

पितृश्रवण यो ददायद् अस्मै ॥

' To him who makes the offering, the Deity (Soma)  
gives the milch cow, He gives the fleet steed,

And He gives the hero son,  
who is fit for work,

fit for home, fit for the (social) assembly, fit for  
the (political) council,

and a glory to his father

Here the ideal son desired by the father is described. He is *Karmanya* (कर्मण्य), capable of *Karma* or work, *Sadanya* (सदन्य), fit for *Sadan*, the household, capable of discharging domestic responsibilities, *Vidathya* (विदथ्य) fit for *vidatha*, the assembly—a gathering of the people which is social and religious in nature, hence capable of discharging his duties to the community or social group of which he is a member and *Sabheya* (सभेय), fit for *sabhā*, the political body guiding the king in administration, conduct of warfare etc. hence, fit to perform political duties to his state. Finally he brings glory to his father by his character and achievements and so he is *pitriravana* (पितृश्रवण).

Hence the ideal citizen has primarily to be a man capable of work and then he must do his duties in widening spheres of action—to his household, his society and his state.



## The Path of Action V—Social Order.

### (70) Four Limbs of Society

If human society is imagined to be a mighty Person (पुरुष), then his important limbs should represent the important orders of society

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखम् आसीद्  
बाहू राजन्यः कृतः ।  
ऊरु तद् अथ यद् वैश्यः ।  
पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥

ऋ. १०।१०।१२

“The man of knowledge (*Brahmana*) was his mouth,  
his arms were made the ruling man (*rajanya*),  
His thighs were that which is the man of industry  
(*Vaishya*),  
out of his feet was born the working man  
(*Sudra*)

Society should consist of men following four broad types of pursuits—culture, politics, industry and labour.

[The Vedas think of types of work not *castes* i. e. fixed hereditary groups of men]

It is to be noted that the Vedas recognise the dignity of labour by making the labourer an essential part of Purusha, the Divine Person,

## (71) Prayer for a powerful state

Society becomes powerful when each of these forces fully develops.

आ ब्रह्मन्  
 ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसो जायताम्  
 आ सध्रे राजन्युः शूरा इषभ्योऽतिथ्याधी  
 महारथो जायता  
 दोग्ध्रो धेनुर् बोधानङ्गवान्  
 आशुः सतिः  
 पुण्ड्रिर् योषा  
 जिष्णू रथेष्ठाः समेयो युवांस्य  
 यजमानस्य वीरो जायतां  
 निकामे निकामे नः पर्जन्यो वरुण  
 कञ्चव्यो नऽऔषधयः पञ्चगतां  
 योगधेमो नः कल्पताम् ॥

य ( वा ) २२।२२

" O Brahman, May there be born in this kingdom the wise man (Brahman) illustrious for spiritual knowledge ,  
 may there be born the ruling man (rajanya),  
 heroic, skilful archer, piercing with shafts, mighty warrior ,

the cow giving abundant milk, the ox good at carrying, the swift horse ,

[ and ] the highly intellectual woman.

May there be born to the sacrificer a youthful son,  
willing victory, best of chariot fighters, worthy of the  
assembly.

May rain fall as we desire. May our fruit-bearing  
plants ripen May our war and peace prosper.

(72) Source of Social Vitality.

ब्रह्म जिवन्तम् उत जिवन्त विद्यः

ऋ. ८।३५।१६

क्षत्र जिवन्तम् उत जिवन्त नृन्

ऋ. ८।३५।१७

धेनून् जिवन्तम् उत जिवन्त विधः

ऋ. ८।३५।१८

“ Animate the power of knowledge  
and strengthen the intellect,

Animate the fighting power  
and strengthen the heroes ;

Animate the milch cow  
and strengthen the masses of people ”

The Deities are Aswins Each of these prayers is  
followed by the refrain—

इदं रक्षासि श्वेतम् अमीवाः

‘ Slay the lawless enemies ( Rakshasas )  
and drive away disease ’

These verses indicate the original conception of the  
three *varnas*—Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya.

representing, respectively, the cultural, political and economic interests of society.

### (73) Prayer for Threefold Power

<sup>1</sup> In the following the same individual prays for the powers of Brahmana, Kshatriya and Varshya, all in one

कुविन् मा गोपा करसे जनस्य  
 कुविद् राजानं मघवन् ऋजीपिन्  
 कुविन् म ऋषिं पपिवाच सुतस्य  
 कुविन् मे वरुणो अमृतस्य शिशाः ॥

ऋ. ३।४३।५

“ Wilt Thou make me guardian of the people?  
 Wilt Thou make me, impetuous Maghavan!  
 their ruler?  
 Wilt Thou make me a Rishi ( sage ) who drinks  
 Soma juice?  
 Wilt Thou make me master of wealth ever-  
 lasting? ”

### (74) Prayer for All Classes of Society

रुच नो धेहि ब्राह्मणेभ्यु  
 रुच ५ राजसु नस्कृधि ।  
 रुच विश्वेभ्यु शूद्रेभ्यु  
 मयि धेहि रुचा रोचम् ॥

य. १८।४८

"Give lustre to our men of holy lore (Brahmanas), give lustre to our kingly men (Kshatriyas), give lustre to commoners (Vaishyas), and working men (Śudras), give, through lustre, lustre to me."

Here lustre or intellectual and spiritual brilliance is sought for all sections of the people

### (75) Guardians of Social Law

ऋतावाना नि पेदतुः

साम्राज्याय मुक्तू

भूतमवा क्षत्रिया

ध्वम् आशुतुः ॥

ऋ. ८।२५।८

"Upholders of Eternal Law,

exceedingly powerful,

They have set themselves down

for sovereignty

Valiant heroes, whose laws

stand fast,

have obtained the guardianship (of the earth)."

This is spoken of Mitra and Varuna, Guardians of cosmic law, it also applies to social law, of which the earthly king is guardian. Therefore the kingly man—राजन्—has been described as a Kshatriya (क्षत्रिय).

The Yajurveda applies these descriptive terms to the king [ य (रा) १०।२७ ].

Elsewhere the Yajurveda invokes Mitra and Varuna to inspire the king in his task

मित्रः सत्यः वरुणो धर्मपतीनाम् ॥

य ( वा ) १/३९

" May Mitra quicken thee ( the king ) for truth and Varuna for the guardian sway."

(76) 'Swarajya '

प्रेक्षामीहि धृष्णुहि  
न ते वज्रो नि यंते ।  
इन्द्र नृभं हि ते शवो  
हनो वृषं जया अपो  
ऽर्चन्तु स्वराज्यम् ॥

ऋ १/८०/३

" Go forward, be bold,  
and fight !  
Thy thunderbolt cannot  
be subdued.  
Indra ! manliness is  
thy strength,  
Strike the power of evil,  
win the waters,  
acclaiming thy own  
royal sway."

This address to the Deity, the ideal Hero, also applies to the hero-man. He should make manliness

his strength, he should bravely fight evil, win what is good (symbolised by 'waters') and declare 'swarajya'—his own self rule on the earth.

Indra's thunderbolt symbolises the power coming out of justice ( धृति ) and truth ( सत्य ).

### (77) The King's task

स्वराड् असि सप्तहा  
सप्तराड् असि अभिमातिहा  
जनराड् असि रक्षोहा  
सर्वराड् अस्यभिन्नहा ॥

य ( वा ) ५।२४

' Self—ruler art thou,  
conquering foes,  
ruler forever art  
thou, conquering aggressors,  
Ruler of the people art thou,  
destroyer of wicked powers,  
a'l ruler art thou,  
destroyer of enemies '

The king's essential task is to fight the evil forces of the world and enforce the law of justice. The following aim of kingship as described in Yajurveda—

रक्षसां त्वा वधाय

य ( वा ) १।३९

' We enjoin thee to destroy wicked power ( Rak-

In this respect the king shares the function of Indra, the slayer of Vritra ( Symbolic Power of evil ) :

इन्द्रस्य वाज्रं धनुम् अवि

य. ( वा. ) १०।८

" Thou art Indra's Vritra—slaying weapon ( referring to the new king's bow ) "

त्वया इयं वृत्रं वधेत्

य १०।८

" With thee ( the bow ) may this man ( i. e. the king ) kill " Vritra ( the Power of evil ).

The Kshatriyas, guardians of the people, are champions of right against wrong Their daily task is to fight and subdue the wicked

अभिध्याम रक्षत.

ऋ. १०।१३२।२

" May we subdue the wicked "

रणं कृधि रणकृत् सत्यशुभा

ऋ. १०।११२।१०

" Fight, warrior, strong in truth "

मा नो दुःखस ईशता

ऋ. १०।२५।७

" Let not the wicked rule us

(78) The Dasyu—Power of Lawlessness.

The power of wickedness is called दस्यु in the Vedas,

" God is a destroyer of the Dasyu "

स वज्रभृद् दस्युदा भीम उग्र.

ऋ. १।१००।१२



"He is the holder of the thunderbolt, destroyer of the Dasyu ( wicked ), fearful and mighty

He is दसुहन्तम्—( ऋ. १०।१७०।२ )—the Supreme Destroyer of the Dasyu."

The " Arya " is one who lives by Truth and Law; the Dasyu is the lawless inhuman being :

अक्रमां दसुर् अभि नो अमन्तुर्

अन्यत्रतो अमानुषः ।

त्वं तस्यामित्रहन् वधर्

दास्य दग्धय ॥

ऋ. १०।२२।८

The Evil doing Dasyu is around us, senseless, keeping false laws, inhuman :

O slayer of the foe, baffle the weapon of the Dasa." Elsewhere the Dasyu is called

अन्यत्रतम् अमानुषम्

अयज्वानम् अदेवयुम्

ऋ. ८।७०।११

"Followers of evil laws, inhuman, riteless, godless."

(79) " Subdue malignity."

The Kshatriya ideal requires uncompromising and unrelenting opposition to the powers of evil :

अभिवृत्त्य सपत्नान्

अभि या नो अरातयः ।

अभि पृथग्यन्तं तिष्ठ

आभि यो न हस्त्याति ॥

ऋ. १०।१७४।२

Subduing our antagonists, subduing all malignities,  
Withstand the man who menaces,  
Withstand the man who teases us."

(80) "War fury"

The power of fighting evil has been called मनु,  
Wrath, in the Vedas. The following are addressed  
to Manu.

अग्निरिव मन्यो त्विषितः सहस्र  
सेनानीनः सङ्गरे हूत एषि ।  
हस्वाय शत्रून् वि भजस्व वेद  
ओजो मिमानो विमृषो नुदस्व ॥

श. १०।८४।२

" Flashing like fire, O conquering Wrath !  
be Thou invoked, O Victor ! as our army's leader !  
Slay our enemies, divide their possessions,  
Showing forth thy valour, scatter those who hate us."

(81) Aryanise the World

इन्द्र वर्धन्तो अमृतः  
कृष्णन्तो विश्वम् आर्यम्  
अपमन्तो अराण्यः ॥

श. १।६३।५

" May the active be glorifying God,  
Aryanising all,  
driving away the lawless."

To aryanise people is to bring them under the sway of moral law. The lawless, who are too inhuman for being aryanised or civilised, should be expelled.

The Veda is uncompromising in its opposition to evil.

### (82) The Righteous War

The warrior fighting for a righteous cause is blessed in the following terms:

मर्माणि ते वर्मणा छादयामि  
 ओमस्त्वा सञ्जामृतनानु वस्ताम् ।  
 उरोर् धरायिो वदणस् ते कृणोतु  
 जयन्त त्वानु देवा मदन्तु ॥

ऋ. ६।७५।१८

शाम. १८७०

शु. य. १७।४९

अ. ७।११८।१

“Thy vital parts I cover with the coat of mail,  
 May King Soma clothe thee in immortality,  
 May Varuna make thee more than sufficient and in  
 thy triumph may the Gods rejoice.”

The Gods will rejoice only in the triumph of a good cause. Hence the last portion of the prayer implies that the warrior should fight for a right cause.

### (83) Oppose the destroyer even if a kinsman

The agent of evil and our enemy must be opposed and conquered, whether he is our own by race or a

foreigner. Hence the righteous war is not what is known as "religious war," i. e. war against followers of other religions; the righteous war can be waged against our own kith and kin.

यो नः स्वो अणो  
यश्च निष्टयो जिघांसति ।  
देवास् तं सर्वे धूवंन्तु  
वक्ष बर्म ममान्तरम् ॥

क. ६/७५/१९

स. १८७२

" Whatever enemy wants to kill us,  
Whether he is a stranger or one of us,  
May All Gods discomfit him  
My prayer is the coat of mail within me."  
The Samaveda adds a half-line after the last

यमे बर्म ममान्तरम्

[ And ] " Divine Grace is the coat of mail within me."

The problem of Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, whether a kinsman, ranged against him in the battle-field, should be fought against, had been solved in the Veda. It is, however, interesting to find the Bhagavad Gita fully supporting the Vedic attitude. Sri Krishna chastises the weak sentimentality of Arjuna as something un-Aryan, अनार्य, presumably upholding the Vedic

(85) The King and the People

अस्मे वोऽवस्विन्द्रियम्  
अस्मे नृम्णम् उत प्रतुर्  
अस्मे वचांसि सन्तु वः ।  
नमो मात्रे पृथिव्यै  
नमो मात्रे पृथिव्या इदं ते राड्  
यन्तासि यमनो भुवोऽसि धरुणः ।  
कृष्ये त्वा क्षेमाय त्वा रर्ये त्वा पोषाय त्वा ॥

य. १।२२

" In us may there be your power,  
in us your valour, your wisdom,  
in us be your mental splendour.

Obeisance to Mother Earth,  
Obeisance to Mother Earth !

This is thy sovereignty.

† Thou art the controller, ruler,

Thou art steady, firm.

Thee for culture of the land,

Thee for peace, thee for wealth,

Thee for nurture "

The king is addressed here by the people consecrating him<sup>1</sup>. It is in them that his power, vigour, wisdom and light lie. Mother earth signifies the country in particular.

The following verse deals with the function of the leaders of society in relation to the state.

(86) **The well-being of all the people**

मनो मे तर्पयत वाच मे तर्पयत  
चक्षुर्मे तर्पयत श्रोत्रं मे तर्पयत ।  
आत्मान मे तर्पयत प्रजा मे तर्पयत  
पशून् मे तर्पयत गणान् मे तर्पयत  
गणा मे मा वितृपन् ॥

य (वा) ६।३१

“ Let my mind be contented,  
let my speech be contented,  
let my eye be contented,  
let my ear be contented.  
Let myself be contented,  
let my progeny be contented,  
let my herds be contented,  
let my people be contented  
Let not my people thirst ”

This is a prayer of a King  
The king defends and unites the people

अथा नऽइन्द्रऽइद् विशो ऽसपत्नाः समनसरकरत् ॥

य (वा) ७।२५

“ So now may Indra verily make the people free  
from foes, and all of one mind ”

## (87) The Watchmen of the State

वाजस्येमं प्रभवः सुपुवेऽग्रे सोम २  
 राजानम् भोदधीष्वप्सु ।  
 ता ऽस्मभ्यं सधुमतीर् भवन्तु  
 वयं२ राष्ट्रे जगद्वाम पुहृदिताः स्वाहा ॥

२. १।२३

" O Agni, thus furtherance of strength led forward  
 King Soma in the plants and waters,

Let these be full of sweetness for us

We, in the state, being stationed in the front, shall  
 remain wakeful "

The leaders of Society will keep constant vigilance  
 over the State, being placed in the front rank of citizens.  
 The king is the ruler, but it should be enlightened rule  
 guided by the leaders of the people.

[ These verses precede the Rajasnya sacrifice ]

## (88) Subjects of a greater King

विद्य ऽएव वो ऽमी राजा  
 सोमो ऽस्माकं ब्राह्मणानां२ राजा ॥

५ ( वा ) १।४०

" O people ! This is your King.

Soma is King over us, followers of divine know-  
 ledge ( Brahmanas )."

This is part of a prayer in the *Rajasuya Yajna*.

The spiritual men recognised no earthly King. their only King was God.

The word 'Brahmana' does not imply a caste in the Vedas. Brahmanas, upholders of sacred wisdom and performers of sacred rites were generally sages (Rishis). In later times Sāṅnyasis have claimed this privilege of independence of the state and kingly sway.

### (89) The Popular Assembly

The Vedas speak of the *Sabhā*, a people's assembly, as part of the constitution of the State. There are also other popular bodies like the *Vidatha*, *Samiti*, *Samana* etc. A good ruler and a good citizen has to be *Sabheya* (समेय) worthy of taking part in the assembly.

The Rigveda speaks of the importance in Society of the man who carries the day in the assembly.

सर्वे नन्दन्ति यशसाश्रितेन  
सभासादेन सखाया सखायः ।  
किञ्चिदप्यसृष्टं पितृपणिर् ह्येषाम्  
अर इतिो भवति वाजिनाय ॥

ऋ. १०/७१/१०

"All friends rejoice in the friend who comes with glory, having triumphed in the assembly.

• He, verily, is their protector from evil, provider of food, fit is he for deeds of vigour."



## (90) The Ideal Citizen

सोमो धेनु सोमो अर्बन्तम् आशु  
सोमो वीरं कर्मण्यं ददाति ।  
सादन्य विदप्यं उमेयं  
पितृभवनं यो ददाशुद् अस्मै ॥

ऋ. ३।१।२०

To him who worships the Deity gives  
the milch-cow, the fleet steed,  
and the heroic man  
who is fit for work,

fit for home, fit for the ( social ) assembly, fit  
for the ( political ) council ; and a glory to his father.

## (91) Harmony of Wisdom and Valour

यत्र ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च सम्यग्नी चरतः सह ।  
तल्लोकं पुण्यं प्रपद्ये यत्र देवाः सद्गमिना ॥

य ( वा ) २०।२५

" That world I would know where spiritual power  
( *brahma* ) and ruling power ( *Kshatra* ) move  
together in harmony,

and where Gods with Agni dwell "

The combination of the ruler and philosopher, of  
valour and wisdom has been an ideal preached by  
thinkers of later ages too.

## (92) Social Unity

सं गच्छन्वं संवदन्वं सं वो मनासि जानताम् ।

देवा भारं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते ॥२॥

समानो मंत्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तम् एयाम् ।

समान मन्त्रम् अभि मंत्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥३॥

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः

समानम् अस्तु वो मनः यथा वः सुसहासति ॥४॥

ऋ. १०।१९१

" Assemble ; speak with one another ,

Let your minds be of one accord.

As ancient gods' unanimous enjoy their due portions.

May your aim be common,

your assembly common ,

Common the mind, and their thoughts united.

A common purpose do I lay before you ,

and worship with your common oblation.

Common be your aim, and your hearts united ,

Your mind be one so that all may happily live together."

The Atharva veda supplies a variant of the first line by way of—one may say—explanation :

सं जानीष्वं सं पृथ्यष्वम्

अ. ६।६४।१

' Agree and hold together.'

(93) God is common to all

यच्चिद्धि शश्वताम् असीन्द्र साधारणत्वम् ।

तं त्वा वयं हवामहे ॥

ऋ. ८।६७।७

As, O God ! Thou art for ever, the

Common Lord of all alike

As such we invoke thee now."

Also compare—

समानम् इन्द्रम् अवसे हवामहे

ऋ. ८।९९।८

" We invoke for our succour Indra who is the  
common friend of all."

(94) Hate not the Foreigner

अयंम्यं वरुण मित्र्य वा

सखाय वा सदमिद् भ्रातरं वा ।

वैश वा नित्यं वरुणारणं वा

यत् सीमागन् चकृमा शिष्यस् तत् ॥

ऋ. ५।८५।७

If, Varuna, we have sinned against the man who  
loves us, or against a friend,

Or a comrade for ever, or a brother,

Or against a neighbour who is always with us or  
against a stranger,

From that sin thou release us."

Here the prayer is for forgiveness, for sins against the stranger as well as the neighbour.

Note also

यः सदेस्यो वरुणो यो विदेस्यः अ. ४।२६।८

'Varuna who is of our own land, and also of foreign land.'

' [95] Vedas for all

The Veda states that its wise words are for all mankind, not to be limited to any group or nationality

येमेमा वानं कत्याणीम्

आवदानि जनेभ्यः

ब्रह्मराज्याभ्या

शूद्राय चार्याय च

स्वाय चारणाय च ।

यजु. २६।२

" So may I speak these blessed words to the people  
• at large

to the Brahmana and the Kshatriya,

to the Shudra and the Vaisya,

to my own people and to the foreigner "

[96] Universal Friendship

Vedic universality requires man to establish friendship with the whole universe with all other beings

मित्रस्य मा चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षन्ताम् ।

मित्रस्यैव चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे ।

मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे ॥ यजु. ३६।२८

May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend;  
may I look on all beings with the eye of a friend;  
may we look on one another with the eye of a friend;

### (97) Freedom from Fear

Friendship leads to fearlessness and peace and  
works for universal happiness :

अभयं मित्राद् अभयम् अमित्राद्  
अभयं ज्ञाताद् अभयं पुनो यः ।  
अभयं नक्तम् अभयं दिवा नः  
सर्वा आद्या मम मित्रं भवन्तु ॥

अ. १९।१५।६

"May I be fearless of the friend, fearless of the foe,  
fearless of the known, fearless of the unknown ,  
May our nights be without fear, our days without  
fear.

May all the directions be my friends."

### (98) The Beautiful Earth

Finally we must accept the earth with its joys and  
sorrows, its clashes and conflicts and live as its lords -

यस्यां गायन्ति नृत्यन्ति भूम्ना मर्त्या व्यैश्वाः ।  
युष्यन्ते यस्याम् आक्रन्दो यस्या वदति हुन्दुभिः ।  
सा नो भूमिः प्र शुद्धतां सपत्नान् असपत्नं  
मा पृथिवी कुणोदु ॥ अ. १२।१।४१

May the Earth—the Earth whereon men sing and  
dance with various noise,

Whereon men meet in battle, and the war-cry rises  
and the drum resounds,

May she subdue my foemen and make me free  
from foes.

(99) *The free Man on a fine Earth*

गिरवस्ते पर्वता हिमवन्तो  
दृश्यं ते पृथिवि स्योनम् अस्तु  
बभ्रु कृष्णां रोहिणीं विश्वरूपां  
ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीम् इन्द्रशुभ्राम् ।  
अजीतोऽहतो असनोऽभ्यष्टो पृथिवीम् अहम् ॥

अ. १२।१।११

"O Earth, pleasant be Thy hills and snow-clad  
mountains and thy wood-lands !

In the Earth—brown, black, ruddy and of all  
colours—the firm Earth, the Earth protected  
by the Deity (*Indra*),

Upon this Earth I—unconquered, unslain, un-  
wounded, have set my foot."

(100) *Earth's Inhabitants*

The earth is not for the races of men alone but for  
other creatures also.

त्वज् जातास् त्वयि चरन्ति मर्त्योम्  
 त्वं विभर्षि द्विपदस् त्वं चतुष्पदः ।  
 तवेमे पृथिवि पञ्च मानवा  
 येभ्यो ज्योतिर् अमृत मर्त्येभ्य  
 उद्यन् तूयौ रादेमभिर् आतनोति ॥

अ. १२।१।१५

Born of Thee, on Thee move mortal creatures,  
 Thou bearest them — the biped and the  
 quadruped,

Thine, O Earth, are the five races of men, to whom,  
 mortals, Surya (Sun), as he rises, spreads  
 with his rays the light that is immortal."

### (101) Earth's Variety

The earth does not belong to a single race, but to  
 different races, speaking different languages.

जन विभ्रती बहुधा विवाचधं  
 नानाधर्माण पृथिवी ययीकसम् ।  
 सहस्र धारा द्रविणस्य मे दुहा  
 ध्रुवेव धेनुर् अनपस्फुरन्ती ॥

। ।

अ. १२।१।४५

May the Earth that bears people speaking varied  
 language,

With various religious rites according to the places  
of abode

Enrich me with wealth in a thousand streams  
Like a milch-cow that never faileth."

This recognition of the variety of language and  
actual lies at the bottom of the catholic outlook of the  
Vedic religion. It has aimed at creating unity in  
variety, and not uniformity. That is how different  
tribes and classes of people, living at different stages of  
civilisation, including primitive tribes, have developed  
on their own lines, under the benevolent and uplifting  
influence of the Vedic religion. The higher they rose,  
the more thorough was the assimilation into Vedic  
spiritual, moral and intellectual culture.

### (102) Concord with the Universe

द्यौः शान्तिर् अन्तरिक्षं च शान्तिः

पृथिवी शान्तिर् आपः शान्तिर् ओषधयः शान्तिः ।

वनस्पतयः शान्तिर् विश्वे देवाः शान्तिर् ब्रह्म शान्तिः

सर्वं च शान्तिः शान्तिर् एव शान्तिः

सा मा शान्तिर् एषि ॥

य (वा) ३६।१७

अ १९।९।१४

"Peace of sky, peace of mid region, peace of earth,  
peace of waters, peace of plants,  
Peace of trees, peace of All-Gods, peace of  
Brahman, peace of the universe, peace of peace:  
May that peace come to me ! "



## The Path of Action VI

### . Ritual ( कर्मकांड )

#### (103) Four Ways with the Scripture

The Veda speaks of four different ways in which people deal with the Vedic text :

ऋचां त्वः पोषमास्ते पुपुष्वान्  
गायत्र त्वो गायति शकरीषु ।  
ब्रह्मा त्वो वदति जातिविद्यां  
यश्च मात्रा वि मिमीत उ त्वः ॥

ऋ. १०/७१/१२

‘ One plies his constant task, reciting the verses ;  
One sings the sacred psalm in Sakvari measures ,  
Another, the master of knowledge, imparts the  
knowledge of being ,

and still another lays down the rules of sacrifice,

Here the four types of men deal with the Veda in four different ways : one recites the poetry, a second sings it, a third speaks of the knowledge contained in it and a fourth arranges a ritual. Hence to recite the Veda, to sing it, to realise and propagate the knowledge of it and to perform rituals through it—these were the different activities undertaken by followers of the Vedas. The first type of man has done inestimable service by handing down the Veda by oral transmission throughout

the ages, and the second type has put a new charm into Vedic poetry by setting it into music, it is the third type of man—the man of knowledge who has been engaged in the most important task, viz.—that of spreading knowledge. The fourth type of man does something that is temporary—the ritual, and that varies from age to age.

#### (104) Blessed Rites

मद्रो नो आग्नेराहुतो

मद्रा रात्रिः सुमग मद्रो अभ्याः ।

मद्रा उत प्रशस्तया ॥

ऋ. ८।१९।१९

साम. १११, १५५९

य (वा) १५।३८-३९

'Blessed be Agni invoked by us,

Blessed the oblation,

O Gracious One ! may our sacrifice be blessed ,

Blessed be our songs of praise '

The special effect of the ritual is that it creates an atmosphere of holiness and bliss

Mark the grave rhythm of the lines

#### (105) New Rites

ब्रह्मा कृणोति वरुणो

गातुविद तम् ईमहे ।

व्यूणोति ह्रदा मतिं

नव्यो जायताम् ऋतं ॥

वित्त मे अस्य रोदसी ॥

ऋ. १।१०५।१५

" Varuna makes songs of prayer ;  
 We worship Him who finds the path.  
 He reveals the hymn in the heart.  
 Let the rite be born anew.  
 [ O Heaven and Earth know this ! ] "

### (106) ' Improve the Ritual '

That the ritual is a changing thing is stated in the Veda .

त्वं नो अग्ने सनये धनाना  
 यशस कांक्षं कृणुहि स्तवानः ।  
 ऋष्याम कर्मापवा नवेन  
 'देवैर् द्यावापृथिवी प्रावतं नः ॥ ऋ. १।३।१।८

' Thou, O Agni, for the treasuring of riches  
 make the singer famous—

Thou highly lauded ;

May we improve the rite with new performance.

O Heaven and Earth ! with the Gods, protect us '

' May we improve the rite ( कर्म ) with new performance '—clearly means that कर्मकांड—the ritual is never permanent; in fact, it is the duty of the worshipper to improve it from time to time.

### (107) Right Life a preparation for Religious Rite

Again no ritual is worth one's while unless the person performing it comes spiritually prepared for it—

with a pure body, a pure heart, and a clean life : a life lived according to moral and spiritual law ( *ऋत* ) The

*Dasyu* is *avarata*—unholy in life.

ऋतं वदन्तु युष्म

सत्यं वदन् सत्यकर्मन् ।

अद्या वदन् सोम राजन्

घात्रा सोम परिष्कृत

इन्द्रायेन्दो परि खव ॥

१ ऋ. १।११३।४

" Declaring the law, splendid by law,  
declaring truth, truthful in act,  
*Declaring reverence, O Soma, King* !  
By thy creator Thou art decorated  
may Indu flow towards Indira "

(108) The Evil-doer unfit for Ritual

प्रतान् मानाद् अप्या ये समस्वरम्

सूत्रोक्त्यन्त्रातो रमसस्य मन्त्रवः ।

अपानक्षातो बधिरा अहासत

ऋतस्य वय्या न तरन्ति दुःकृतः ॥

ऋ. १।७३।६

\* Those that from ancient seats manifested  
themselves—

the guides of song and counsellors of movement,

From these the eyeless and the deaf have turned aside.

The evil doers travel not the path of *Eternal Law* \*

The guides are literally 'lights' \* The wise sages.'

The spiritually blunt ( ' eyeless,' ' deaf ' ) ignore them. But for such is not the path of *Rita* ( ऋत )—the *Eternal Law* of life, and the *Holy Law* of worship—*yajna* ( यज्ञ ). The sacred rite is not for the spiritually eyeless and deaf or for the immoral and wicked. The path of worship is the path of goodness. " *Rita* " as truth, goodness, justice, must precede " *Rita* " as sacrifice

(109) **Keep out the Licentious**

न यातव इन्द्र जलुबुनो ,

न वन्दना शशिष्ठ वेधामिः ।

स शर्षद् अयो विपुणस्य जन्तोर्

मा शिश्रदेवा अवि गुरु ऋतं नः ॥ ऋ ७।२१।५

" No wicked ones, O *Indra* ! have impeiled us,  
nor fiends, O *Thou* most mighty ! with their devices,  
May the Noble One subdue the hostile crowd ;  
May not the lewd approach our rituals."

(110) **The Man Dear to God**

न तं जिनन्ति बहवो न दभ्रा

उर्वस्वा अदितिः शर्म यंसत् ।

प्रियः सुहृत् प्रिय इन्द्रे मनायुः

प्रियः सुपावीः प्रियो अस्य सोमो ॥ ऋ. ४।२५।५।

" Neither the many nor the few overcome him ;  
Aditi will give spacious shelter to Him ;  
Dear is the well-doer to Indra, dear the devout,  
dear the zealous, dear the offerer of oblation."

### (111) Divine Grace

देवाना मद्रा मुमतिर् ऋजूयता  
देवाना रात्रिर् आनि नो नि वर्तताम् ।  
देवाना सख्यम् उप सेदिमा वय  
देवा न आयुः प्र तिस्तु जीवसे ॥

ऋ. १।८९।२

" May the blissful love of the righteous Gods  
be ours,

the grace of Gods lie about us ;  
The friendship of Gods we have sought,  
may Gods extend our life so that we may live "  
Note the sombre rhythm of the verses.

### (112) Prayer without Ritual

The ritual is not essential to prayer People may  
pray in their minds at any time, anywhere

इन्द्र परे ऽ वरे मध्यमास  
इन्द्र यान्तो ऽ वसितास इन्द्रम् ।  
इन्द्रं धियन्न उत युष्यमाना  
इन्द्र नरो वाजयन्तो हवन्ते ॥

ऋ. ४।२५।८

" The high and the low and the middling,  
and men who are going, and men who are returning  
—they pray to Indra.

Men who dwell at home, and men who are in battle  
All men, desiring power, pray to Indra."

(113) Not by Ritual one attains God

नविष्ट कर्मणा नयद्

यश्चकार सदावृषम्

इन्द्रं न यश्च विश्वगूतम् क्रम्वसम्

अधृष्टं धृष्टवोचसम् ॥

ऋ. ८।७०।३

" None by action attains to Him who works and  
forever strengthens,

Not by sacrifice one attains to Indra, the praised  
of all, the irresistible, the valiant, the bold in  
might

(114) Knowledge above all

ऋचो अथरे परम ंपोमन्

यस्मिन् देवा अभि विश्वे निपेदुः ।

यस् तस्य वेद किम् ऋचा करिष्याति

य इत् तद् विदुस् त इमे समावृते ॥ ऋ. १।१६४।३९

" The Eternal of the ( Vedic ) hymns—the supreme  
region in which all Shining Ones exist—

One who does not know that, what will he do with  
( Vedic ) hymns? But those who have known  
that—they are perfect.

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## CORRIGENDA

Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct
"	5	twenty four	twenty
xvii	1		(omit this line)
"	10	literature	literature
xxvii	1	Unitheism	Henotheism
"	16-17	We ..Unitheism	(omit this sentence)
xxxi	2	so	no
xxxiv	24	attitnde	attitude
xxxv	7	indentifying	identifying
"	10	THR	THE
xxxvii	9	shantam	santam
xLv	7	arya	aryo
"	9	VIII. 51.1	VIII. 51.9
"	24	syntheized	synthesized
"	20	wno	who
xLvi	5	conception to	conception of
xLviii	10	cence	sense
"	2	Adhyaksha	Adhyaksham
Li	3	तये ।	तपो
Li	25	Deities ]	Deities
"	7	Samasantah	Shamsantah
Lvi	25	bring	brings
"	8	amanausha	amanusha
Lviii	7	krilavah	krilayah
Lxi	12	be hold	the hold
"	"	fundamentalst	fundamentals



Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct
Lxvi	3	सखाय	सखायो
"	4	श्र. १०।१०८।१	श्र. १०।१०३।६
Lxvii	14	be,	be
Lxix	17	nation,	nation,
Lxxv	26	Sakhaya	Sakhyaya
Lxxvi	11	beginning	beginning
Lxxix	9	Verna	Varna
"	13	life	life,
Lxxx	10-	Truth	Truth,
"	10	spirit	spirit,
Lxxxii	5	or offering	of offering
Lxxxiii	3	Somhitas	Sambitas
Lxxxiv	1 1	Yajna, is taken	Yajna is taken,
Lxxxvi	22	पितुर्	पितुस्
"	24	८।१३।४	८।१।२४
xcvi	9	qualified	qualified
xcvii	8	XIX	IX

Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct
5	9	मडिता	मडिता
"	17	"	"
7	12	Agna	Soma
8	last	देवताः	देवा.
34	7	पितर इव	पुत्रायेव पितरा

Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct
166	13	बुध्देम	बुध्दचेम
"	19	मेदि	घेदि
167	9	चतु	चक्षुर्
168	3	शंभुं	शंभु
169	7	पिद्याणि	पिज्याणि
"	11	१।११।१०	१।७१।१०
171	4	भू	भूर
"	18	तनवाम	तनयाय
172	17	६।६१।३	६।६१।३
"	3	युदी	युदा
173	last	then	their
174	८	दधातन	ददातन
"	16	अरिष्ट	अरिष्टं
175	2	इन्द्र	एन्द्र
"	3	सवाजिद्	सप्राजिद्
"	3	२३१	२३१
176	7	१।१६।१८	१।३६।१४
"	15	अनघीमान्	अनमोवान्
181	10	१०।१५३।१	१०।१५७।१
"	last	न मेम न भमिष्येऽमस्य	न मेम मा भमिष्योऽमस्य
182	22	उतिभिः	उतिभिः

Page	Line	Incorrect	Correct
183	9	निश्चितिर्	निश्चितिर्
"	10	१०।६९।२	१०।५९।२
"	21	शुश्रूषाम	शुश्रूषाम
187	13	मूर	मूर
190	11	११।८९।१	१।१८९।१
194	7	यदि	यदी
208	last	६।७७।३.	६।७५।३
209	16	१।३।३	१।७३।३
210	after 17		(insert) अ. ३।३
217	22	विद्येयु	विद्येयु
"	23	रोचम्	रुचम्
219	3	सत्य	सत्यो
220	7	स्वराड्	स्वराड्
"	24	९।३९	९।३८
222	23	विष्ट	विष्टा
234	4	८।६७।७	८।६५।७
237	16	In	On
241	23	गात्रविद	गात्रविदं
243	9	१।११३।४	१।११३।४
244	26	४।२५५	४।२५।५